TOWARDS A VISION OF GOD:

A Study of the Light and Darkness, and Sight and Blindness Imagery in Book 7 of Augustine's *Confessions*

by

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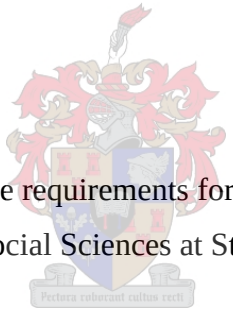

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Summary

This thesis provides a sketch of Augustine's journey towards knowledge of God, and his ensuing encounter with God through philosophical vision, as articulated in book 7 of the *Confessions*. The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which the pervading images of light and darkness, and associated images of sight and blindness are used in book 7 to bolster a protreptic communicative purpose of the book, aimed at the potential Manichaean reader.

To this end, core aspects of the Manichaean doctrine are outlined in order to gain a fuller understanding of the concepts and images in book 7 which would have had special significance for a Manichaean reader. Aspects deemed relevant include their fundamental dualism, which revolved around the struggle between the material realms of light and darkness and pervaded every aspect of their thought; their focus on a literal apprehension of their teachings, and their insistence that the truth of their teachings, and the divine, cosmic struggle between light and darkness, could be witnessed by every person through the senses.

A reading of book 7 of the *Confessions* is then undertaken in which it is found that Augustine establishes a dichotomy between a materialist and a more conceptual, spiritual comprehension of God's nature using contrasting images of blindness and sight, darkness and light. It is found that Augustine employs a model of argumentation which takes as its point of departure the world view of the Manichaeans, showing up the cracks in their thinking. He then presents his new-found perspectives as the better alternative, through the outlaying of proofs based on his reading of the books of the Platonists. Augustine finally describes his quest to locate a transcendent God through philosophical vision, and he raises the importance of spiritual vision and illumination in order to know God, as opposed to physical vision. In this way, the thesis argues that book 7 has a protreptic communicative purpose aimed at the Manichaean reader; that core aspects of Manichaeism are refuted, and that their way of thinking is transformed towards a Neoplatonist-Christian approach, using language with which they were familiar.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis bied 'n skets van Augustinus se reis na kennis van God, en sy daaropvolgende ontmoeting met God deur middel van 'n filosofiese visie, soos verwoord in boek 7 van die *Confessiones*. Die doel van die studie is om te ondersoek in watter mate die alomteenwoordige beelde van lig en duisternis, en gepaardgaande beelde van sig en blindheid in boek 7 gebruik word om 'n protreptiese kommunikatiewe doel van die boek te versterk, gerig op die potensiële Manichese leser.

Om hierdie doel te bereik, word kernaspekte van die Manichese leerstelling uiteengesit ten einde 'n beter begrip te kry van die konsepte en beelde in boek 7 wat vir 'n Manichese leser spesiale betekenis sou gehad het. Aspekte wat as relevant beskou word, sluit in hul fundamentele dualisme, wat draai om die stryd tussen die materiële koninkryke van lig en duisternis en elke aspek van hul denke deurdring; hulle fokus op 'n letterlike begrip van dit wat hulle glo, en hul aandrang daarop dat die waarheid van hul leerstellings en die goddelike, kosmiese stryd tussen lig en duisternis deur elke mens se sintuie waargeneem kan word.

Die interpretasie van boek 7 van die *Confessiones* wat hier aangebied word, argumenteer dat Augustinus 'n dichotomie tussen 'n materialistiese en 'n meer konseptuele, geestelike begrip van God se natuur daarstel met behulp van kontrasterende beelde van blindheid en sig, duisternis en lig. Die bevinding is dat Augustinus 'n model van argumentasie gebruik wat die wêreldbeskouing van die Manicheërs as vertrekpunt gebruik en die foutlyne in hul denke uitwys. Hy bied dan sy nuutgevonde perspektiewe aan as die beste alternatief deur bewyse uiteen te sit gebaseer op sy lees van die boeke van die Platoniste. Augustinus beskryf uiteindelik sy strewe om `n transendente God deur middel van filosofiese visie te vind, en hy beklemtoon die belangrikheid van geestelike visie en illuminasie om God te leer ken, in teenstelling met fisiese visie. Die tesis voer aan dat boek 7 `n protreptiese kommunikatiewe doel het wat op die Manichese leser gerig is; kernaspekte van die Manicheïsme word weerlê, en hul denkwyse word getransformeer om te lei na 'n Neoplatonistiese-Christelike benadering deur die gebruik van taal waarmee hulle vertroud was.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Images of Light and Darkness, Sight and Blindness and a Manichaean Subtext

The *Confessions* of Augustine is a deeply personal and multi-faceted work, which contains Augustine's confession of his moral and spiritual failings, his praise of God, and his faith, and which documents the conditions which allowed for his inner transformation. One of the aspects of the *Confessions* which stands out is Augustine's use of language, which is highly accessible to readers ancient and modern. Of particular interest to this thesis is his use of imagery, specifically images of light and darkness, and the associated images of sight and blindness. According to Lemmelijn (2012:555), many Christian writers used biblical stories relating to the light and darkness as the basis for a constellation of metaphors describing the human condition and the Christian life. Lemmelijn (2012:564) describes how light and darkness are cosmic and natural phenomena, which are used in biblical speech and thought to symbolize states of being and non-being, of life and death, and of good and evil. The interplay of light and darkness is also often intrinsic to an evocation of the holy and the divine. Augustine uses the images of light and darkness in the *Confessions* to interpret his own lived experience and journey to God, and, as I will argue in this thesis, to appeal to his intended audience.

Before an analysis of the images of light and darkness may be carried out, it is necessary to briefly clarify the definition for the term 'image' and 'imagery' which I adhere to throughout this thesis. As Llorens (2003:2) expresses, images may be thought of as the "raw materials" which are used for producing figures of speech, where images may develop a symbolic or metaphorical quality, while symbols, metaphors, and other features like allegory, metonymy and simile result from the "combination or manipulation of images." Drawing from Llorens' definition, I use 'image' and 'imagery' in this thesis as an umbrella term which encompasses other figurative functions, including metaphors, symbols etc. It is also necessary, however, to take note of Augustine's own viewpoint on figurative language.

According to Vaught (2004:16), Augustine follows the Platonic tradition in his awareness that the richest language about God is rooted in the sensible world, linking the lowest level of cognition to the highest place the soul can reach in its efforts to come to an adequate description of God. In book 7 of his *Confessions* especially, Augustine uses visual images to elaborate on a doctrine of illumination whereby he describes how he came to knowledge about God's nature as seeing the light: *vidi…lucem incommutabilem* (*Confessions* 7.10.16). As Rist (1994:33)

argues, at the time of writing his *Confessions*, Augustine was predominantly concerned with God and the ascent of the soul, and even his theory of language is reflective of this.

Blackburn Griffith (2013:213) presents a definition of figurative language according to Augustine's own discussions, in which Augustine refers to figurative or symbolic language as the "wrappings" which cover divine truth that lies waiting to be "shaken out." According to Blackburn Griffith, Augustine regards these "wrappings" as Christ and the humility of God, the means by which divine truth may be mediated to a person. According to Tornau (2019), in *De trinitate* and *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine often refers to the "inner word", where, just as the spoken word signifies a concept that we have formed within our mind and communicate to others, so Christ signifies the divine *logos* in the inner self that cautions us to turn towards God. This is a kind of timeless intellectual insight that transcends knowledge. According to Tornau (2019) Augustine generally held that external verbal and non-verbal signs operate on a lower ontological level than the inward intelligible truth that they attempt to signify and that they are even surpassed by true knowledge, the inner *logos*. Tornau concludes that Augustine's theory of the "inner word" is not a linguistic theory at all, but an "epistemology of illumination." The analysis of the imagery in this thesis will be carried out within Llorens' demarcation of an "image" as encompassing other figurative speech, as well as within Augustine's own viewpoint on the function of figurative language and its relation to divine truth, as outlined above by Blackburn Griffith and Tornau.

Augustine's choice of words and images in the *Confessions* is to a great extent dependent on his subject matter: speaking about God often necessitates metaphorical or symbolic language. Indeed, Augustine came to understand God as existing outside of the human ability to signify through language, which leads to his position on the figurative nature of referring to God. In the *Confessions*, the images of light and darkness seem to be used to demonstrate Augustine's path to conversion, describing his errant beliefs as a condition of darkness, and his ultimate enjoyment in what he deems the true belief system as one of light. In this way, Augustine likely drew from his rhetorical training and used language of the natural world to illustrate abstract notions, such as the nature of God as a metaphysical reality, as well as the intangible emotions, anxieties and desire for certainty in the truth.

While such universal religious images of light and darkness may seem the obvious choice in describing a spiritual journey to God, upon further inspection, the source of inspiration of Augustine's use of light and darkness imagery is more multi-layered. Augustine was well-trained and talented in the art of rhetoric, and there was for him a wealth of metaphorical

language available from the classical literary and philosophical tradition, as well as a corpus of biblical phraseology. In his *Confessions*, Augustine tends to blend language of the Neoplatonists with Christian ideas and scriptural language, and yet he makes it uniquely his own and creates his own imagery. Additionally, I am in agreement with scholars such as Van Oort (2008) and Coyle (2003) who argue that Augustine had an additional source of literary inspiration in the Manichaean books, hymns, and psalms, a point which this thesis will emphasize.

Van Oort (2008:442) considers it crucial that in order to understand Augustine and his works, one must first understand Manichaeism and that it was through Manichaeism that Augustine encountered certain theological problems and arguments, which shaped his way of thinking considerably. He asserts that Manichaeism influenced Augustine's knowledge and exegesis of biblical texts, as well as his "Christology, soteriology, pneumatology, [and] theology" (2008:442). There are also vestiges of Manichaeism in Augustine's view of the body and concupiscence, to such an extent that it has led critics, both ancient and modern, to label him a crypto-Manichaean.[1] Of particular significance is that the occurrence of light and darkness images in the *Confessions* also seem to be an extension of the elements of the Manichaean mythological system and consequently provides some clues as to a deeper communicative purpose and a specific audience being addressed.[2]

I have found in my reading of the *Confessions*, that the images of light and darkness in the work, and associated images of sight and blindness, are noticeably reminiscent of the elements of light and darkness in the Manichaean cosmological myth, their doctrine of salvation, and their daily practices associated with the liberation of light particles from matter. Furthermore, in a number of striking instances, the God whom Augustine addresses in the *Confessions* is defined in opposition to the Manichaean view of God and is explicitly portrayed as being located beyond the bounds of sensory perception, and rather within man's inmost self. The various occurrences of the image of light to describe Augustine's perception of God is furnished with decidedly figurative meaning, and in this way, light for Augustine represents a

[1] This issue is discussed in the highly interesting article by Eddy (2009), where he describes the charges that Augustine faced regarding the vestiges of Manichaeism in his thought, despite his apparent conversion to orthodox Christianity (2009:324-330), the same charge of Augustine's allegiances to Manichaeism in contemporary scholarship (2009:330-341), and a possible direction in which a resolution might be considered (2009:341-346).
[2] I detail the definition I use for communicative purpose in the following section (1.1. Genre, Communicative Purpose, and Intended Audience)

system which contradicts the literal and material perception that the Manichaeans had of their God of light.

When analysing images of light and darkness, I include images of sight and blindness into my examination as they are closely associated images and are used to a similar effect as light and darkness. The conditions of blindness and darkness both signify Augustine's lack of knowledge of the truth about God, as well as his prideful or sinful condition, while vision and light both signify his eventual understanding of God, and his being illumined by God. According to Van Oort's analysis of book 10 of the *Confessions* (2013b:159), Augustine rejects the idea that knowledge of God can be achieved through the physical senses. However, he maintains the "scheme" of the five senses in order to know God. Instead of the physical senses, he speaks of their spiritual counterparts, and in a clearly incorporeal way.[3] In book 7 too, Augustine uses the physical sense of the eyes and vision to describe how *not* to seek God, and instead turns to the "eye of his mind."

Augustine would have understood the role of ordinary language in comprehending the divine, but he also sought to transform this language in order to transform his readers' thought processes and how they conceptualised the divine. It can be argued that, together with refutation or reproof of the Manichaean doctrine and the teaching of a Catholic doctrine, using the language of light and darkness, sight and blindness, Augustine's *Confessions* functions as an exhortation which reveals the inadequacy of the beliefs of his Manichaean audience and urges them towards conversion to new ideas. In this way, the *Confessions* can be viewed as a protreptic text.

In order to position the arguments about the *Confessions* as a protreptic to a potential Manichaean reader within a scientific basis, it is necessary to provide a brief survey of the concepts of genre, communicative purpose and intended audience. In the following section I discuss some of the central premises on which the arguments in chapter 3 are based.

1.2. Genre, Communicative Purpose, and Intended Audience

In my discussion of the genre of the *Confessions*, I am much indebted to Kotzé's study *Augustine's* Confessions*: Communicative Purpose and Audience*, where she outlines the issues

[3] In Van Oort's (2013) examination of book 10 of the *Confessions*, he characterises his approach as one carried out from historical or religio-historical point of view. The aim of his study is to identify where Augustine was directly inspired by Manichaean texts and concepts, and how he made use of them, consciously or unconsciously, positively or negatively (2013b:155).

concerning the protreptic genre and the trouble with defining protreptic literature as a cohesive genre in itself. Like Kotzé, I use the approach to genre of Swales (1990), who argues that genres can be defined by their communicative "events" and that it is primarily the communicative purpose which shapes the genre and provides it with an internal structure. According to Kotzé (2004:53) texts may be considered protreptic on the basis that they share a stable element in their communicative aim: to exhort others to a certain way of life. The communicative purpose also influences the other characteristics of genre such as content, style, rhetorical features (including imagery), tone, and intended audience, etc. (Swales 1990:58).

In her article, Askehave evaluates and critiques the functional approaches of scholars such as Swales (1990) who classify the genre of texts according to their functional features or their 'communicative purpose'. Askehave (1999:19) addresses the question of the multifunctionality of texts and the difficulty with using communicative purpose as genre determinant, arguing that texts seldom fulfil a singular function and that the purpose of a text tends to be subjective. Bearing this in mind, I adopt Swales' approach in my investigation into the communicative purpose of the *Confessions* and his argument that the communicative purpose defines genre. However, I do not attempt to argue for a singular communicative purpose and acknowledge that such a multi-faceted work certainly contains an interconnection of communicative aims and intended audiences.

The complex and multi-layered nature of the *Confessions* has resulted in much debate over the past century regarding the genre and communicative aim of the text, a debate which has not yet been settled up to today. An established viewpoint in the previous century was that the *Confessions* was an autobiographical work, and this brought about various interpretations about the unity of the *Confessions*, about how the last three books containing an exegesis on Genesis fit into the autobiographical narrative in the first nine/ten books.[4] Today there is consensus that the *Confessions* is, in fact, a well-composed whole, and the opinion that it is a purely autobiographical work has fallen out of favour. This is mostly thanks to exhaustive studies by scholars like Grotz (1970), Feldmann (1994), and Holzhausen (2000), which have provided substantial evidence of the unity between the autobiographical narrative in the first ten books, and the exegesis of Genesis in the last three books of the *Confessions*.

[4] The time-honoured scholar, Courcelle (1968:25), himself considered the *Confessions* to be incomplete, and it was widely thought that book ten was a later inclusion, and that the last three books were completely separate from the rest of the work. The expression by Marrou (1958:61), "Augustine compose mal" was iterated by numbers of scholars throughout the rest of the century.

Nevertheless, scholars are still conducting biographical studies on Augustine with information gathered from the *Confessions*, as well as from his (some recently-discovered) letters, and the philosophical dialogues written after his conversion at Cassiciacum. Another debate erupted in the twentieth century about the historicity of the *Confessions*, particularly with regard to Augustine's narration of his conversion in book eight. Most traditional Augustinian scholars tended towards defending the literal truth of all that Augustine narrated, while others believed that he employed literary devices and motifs to create a certain effect. Ferrari (1989) wrote a ground-breaking analysis which called into question a literal understanding of Augustine's narration, titled 'Saint Augustine's Conversion Scene: The End of a Modern Debate?'. In 1992, O'Meara wrote 'Augustine's *Confessions*: Elements of Fiction' and a year later came Bonner's 'Augustine's '"Conversion": Historical Fact or Literary Device.' What most of these papers generally proposed was that the events narrated in the *Confessions* may not necessarily have perfect historical representation as their aim, but rather assist the overarching communicative aim of the text.

As explained by Kotzé (2004:28), autobiography in antiquity was vastly different from modern day autobiographies and was not usually considered a genre in itself. Autobiographical narrative was rather a rhetorical technique and was used by authors in a variety of genres. Some scholars, such as DiLorenzo (1983) and Scott (1992) have also studied the meaning and connotations of the word *confiteri* and argue that Augustine structures his confession in such a way that its aim seems to be more than absolution from past errors. Rather, it appears to be used as an example of philosophical and moral practise, to encourage and influence the lives of the readers of the *Confessions*.[5] And so, it can be assumed that the well-educated Augustine, aware of his literary antecedents, designed an autobiographical narrative containing a confession of his moral and spiritual failings, of praise to God, and of his faith, in order to bolster the exhortative communicative purpose of the work. It is important to point out that on more than one occasion in the *Confessions*, Augustine says that he is telling the story of his life not to inform God about it, but to speak to other men and women in God's presence.[6]

[5] Ayres (2009) also investigates the extent to which the narration of Augustine's conversion in book eight is presented as an act of imitation, by studying Augustine's use of the rhetorical device of exempla. Ayres considers that Augustine adapts the Roman literary tradition of exempla by presenting them in a manner that "follows a plot paradigmatically found in Christ's own descent and ascent, a plot which seems to be woven into the very temporal structure of the created order" (2009:265).

[6] For example, in *Confessions* 5.1.1, 8.1.1, 10.1.1, 10.4.6.

Most scholars acknowledge that Augustine is highly focused on his readers and have proposed various ideas on who this audience encompasses. One of the prominent Augustinian researchers, Peter Brown (2000:153), states that the *Confessions* was written for the *servi Dei*, a group of sophisticated and spiritual men, who wanted to know the course of Augustine's noteworthy conversion. Yet Brown also mentions that the *Confessions* contains secondary appeals to Manichaean or Platonist men who may have wanted to join this Catholic elite. Kotzé (2006:147) disputes this reasoning and describes how "the prominence and strategic placement of strong Manichaean echoes" have convinced her that the primary intended audience of the *Confessions* is the potential Manichaean reader, as well as the Platonist and less educated or eminent Catholic, and only to a lesser extent the spiritual *servi Dei*.

The fact that Manichaeism played a role in Augustine's life and works did not escape the notice of Augustine scholars of the past century, but it has been acknowledged to varying degrees. Kotzé (2004:40) mentions how, as early as 1930, Allgeier was suggesting that protreptic intent in the *Confessions* was significantly aimed at a Manichaean audience, while others have felt that, for Augustine, Manichaeism was merely a spiritual distraction. However, together with increased attention by scholars to the Manichaean phase of Augustine's life, the possible plea that the *Confessions* holds towards his former co-religionists as his intended audience is now slowly being acknowledged.

BeDuhn (2010, 2013) provided a major contribution to the field with his two volumes entitled 'Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma', in which he demonstrates his formidable knowledge of Manichaeism to explore every aspect of Augustine's relationship with Manichaeism and its possible influence on Augustine's Catholic Christian thought. In a separate article which covers Augustine's relationship with Manichaeism, BeDuhn (2013:1) asserts that Augustine occupied a somewhat unique position between Manichaean and Catholic Christianity in his first ten or so years as a Catholic, and that Manichaeism was not simply a negative pole from which Augustine reformed his beliefs, but offered a framework which gave a unique emphasis to Augustine's formulation of Catholic thought. BeDuhn (2013:2) furthermore considers Augustine's contention with Manichaeism in the *Confessions* as being motivated primarily by his ongoing personal ties to individual Manichaeans, and concern with their spiritual well-being, and secondarily by his polemical duty within the Catholic Church to distinguish the two belief systems as much as possible from each other.

While some scholars have asserted that a Manichaean would simply not read the *Confessions* because of its critical treatment of their belief system, Kotzé (2013:108) determines that a

certain kind of Manichaean, whom she terms a "liminal Manichaean", would indeed have read the *Confessions*, and it was this Manichaean that she envisages Augustine to be appealing to. This is one who might already be interested in Catholic Christianity as an alternative to Manichaeism, even one who was close to converting; or perhaps one who had begun to find fault in the Manichaean doctrine or religious practises, and was seeking validation in the *Confessions*. Like the young Augustine, the liminal Manichaean would be one in a state between full commitment to either belief system.

It appears that most of these studies into Augustine and Manichaeism are historical or theological investigations, and Kotzé has provided some of the more extensive literary analyses of the *Confessions*, with the aim of demonstrating the extent to which it holds value as a protreptic towards the Manichaeans.[7] Drawing from Kotzé's (2004:52-65) definitions and from Cook's (1994) article on protreptic in early Christian literature, I outline here a selection of some of the features that are generally characteristic of protreptic literature, aside from their shared intention to convert their readers.[8] This will aid my analyses of the use of light and darkness images in the *Confessions* as a feature of protreptic literature, even if all of the features are not necessary for the protreptic genre.

Firstly, in terms of structure, Kotzé (2004:60) finds that most protreptics contain two distinct stages (sometimes more), which she prefers to call "streams". There is the "negative stream" which refutes claims of rival groups, and a "positive stream" which argues for the writer's particular position. These two streams are often accompanied by a direct appeal to the audience to make a choice on the grounds of the arguments put forth in the first two streams. According to Cook (1994:106), the rhetor used three kinds of proofs to persuade hearers to adopt the intended course of action: logos, ethos, and pathos. These involve the speech itself with its arguments, the moral character of the speaker, and the rousing of the hearers to emotion and persuasion respectively. Cook (1994:115) argues that, in protreptic literature, rhetoricians often incorporate testimonies from eminent and authoritative witnesses, prophecies, or scriptural

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[7] Some of Kotzé's articles include: 'Reading Psalm 4 to the Manicheans' published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001); 'Seven Arguments about the Protreptic Purpose and the Manichaean Audience of Augustine's Confessions' published in *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 18 (2007); 'The 'Anti-Manichaean' Passage in *Confessions* 3 and its 'Manichaean Audience'' published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008); and 'Protreptic, Paraenetic and Augustine's *Confessions*' published in *In Search for Truth: Augustine, Manichaeism, and Other Gnosticism. Studies for Johannes van Oort at Sixty* (2011).

[8] For the term 'conversion,' I follow a definition I found in Gallagher (1993:1), who quotes from Nock's definition of conversion as: "the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that the old was wrong and the new is right" (Nock 1933:7).

quotations to bolster the truth or attractiveness of the position they advocate, as well as the use of *exempla* or stories about the conversion of others, usually eminent people in society. We see this in Augustine's narration of his conversion in book 8 of the *Confessions*, where the conversion stories of some prominent men, as well as a passage from Paul (Rom 13:13), persuade him to accept the Christian message. Kotzé (2004:64-65) mentions some other features of protreptic literature that she has observed, such as the use of an urgent, impatient, or caring tone; the prominence of rhetorical questions or dialogue with a fictive opponent; and recurring sets of imagery, themes or topics, for example the theme of *scientia* and the image of medicine or a physician who heals a diseased soul.

Kotzé (2004:53) argues that since a protreptic text aims to influence its intended audience to convert to a particular philosophy as a way of life, the text must therefore be constructed very specifically toward that intended audience in order to deliver the message effectively. This means that the contents, tone, and rhetorical strategies will depend on the kind of audience that the author anticipates. For scholars who wish to pinpoint this audience, it requires identifying probable or possible audiences through gathering as much information as possible about the world the author lived in, his relationship with his readership, his state of mind when writing the text and his preoccupations, from any available and reliable sources. Kotzé (2004:54) asserts that, in the case of Augustine and the *Confessions*, this also implies a careful reading of the *Confessions* itself for explicit and implicit references to the audience.

In this study, I investigate Augustine's use of a particular image in the *Confessions*, that of light and darkness, which, as fundamental and universally significant religious image, has surprisingly scarcely been delved into by scholars of the *Confessions*.[9] The approach of this study draws on previous scholarship which stresses that Augustine's works must be understood in view of the fact that Augustine was a Manichaean for close to a decade and was well versed in Manichaean thought, their writings, and the images and symbols with which they were familiar. I hope to add to the argument that Augustine expected a Manichaean readership and therefore coded his *Confessions* in a Manichaean way, but gave the imagery new semantic meaning. The aim is to demonstrate that appealing to the Manichaeans was key to the

[9] Studies that focus on the imagery in the *Confessions* in particular are few and far between. O'Donnell (1992) addresses imagery in the *Confessions* in his important three-volume commentary, and the more focused study by O'Connell (1996) discusses the imagery in Augustine's narration of his different conversion experiences along his spiritual journey. Other scholars have studied specific images and metaphors, like Eugene TeSelle's "Looking for Home: Travel as Metaphor in Augustine" (1996) and Laura Moncion's "Erotic Food Metaphors in Augustine's *Confessions*" (2016).

communicative purpose of the *Confessions*, while acknowledging that the *Confessions* contains an interconnection of communicative aims.

I have selected to study the light and darkness imagery in book 7 of the *Confessions* for the scope of this study, since book 7 contains Augustine's narration of how he came to the truth about the nature of God, a breakthrough which proved essential in his ultimate conversion, and which may be presented as an example for his readers to follow. Augustine sets up a contrast between the material and the spiritual using images of sight, blindness, light and darkness; and shows how light, as a symbol of God, can be understood spiritually as opposed to physical light which can be seen with the bodily eyes. Furthermore, the discussion of difficult philosophical and theological questions is central to the book and these happen to be questions which the Manichaeans in Augustine's time enjoyed bringing up against Catholics. In my reading of book 7, Augustine seems to be compelled to settle these arguments once and for all. Finally, book 7 has been investigated extensively by scholars of philosophy and theology, however, as far as I am aware, the elements of Augustine's arguments in book 7 have not been systematically interpreted in view of the reference system formed by Manichaean language, and the possible appeal to the Manichaeans has been somewhat passed over. The last section of this chapter gives a brief exposition of some theoretical aspects and framework for the present study and also deliberates on its possible findings.

1.3. Some Theoretical Considerations

The historical and theological investigations into Augustine's relationship with Manichaeism can be valuably supplemented with the more contemporary approach of post-classical narratology. My analysis of the imagery of light and darkness is based on the argument that Augustine's *Confessions* is a protreptic text aimed at converting its intended audience, and, in studying the communication situation of the *Confessions*, I will be working within a broad narratological framework. In my discussions, I make use of a number of terms from narratology as explained by Schönert, Margolin, and Schmid in *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (2014).

Schönert (2014:1) provides a concise explanation of the terms real author and narrator that I find useful for my discussions in chapter 3. Schönert defines the real author of a text as the entity responsible for the communicative intention and form of a work. Following the definitions that Schönert sets out, I will regard the author Augustine as an important point of reference in ascribing meaning in the *Confessions*, however I look primarily towards internal

evidence in the text for clues of the communicative intent of the work, rather than making any claims about the authorial intent of the historical Augustine. For this, I also take into account an important aspect of the context relevant to understanding the light and darkness imagery in the *Confessions*, namely the Manichaean emphasis on light and darkness in their religious thought.

Augustine as narrator is set apart from the author Augustine, as what Margolin (2014:1) terms the "textually encoded agent" from which the discourse originates. According to Margolin (2014:5), the narrator has a purely communicative role, but an 'image' of the narrator can be constructed more fully by the reader. Margolin terms this 'individuating the narrator' and elaborates that this can be achieved, primarily, by examining the narrator's speech- their style, tone, and expression of emotion- and the textual elements that go beyond the strict reporting of facts. Margolin (2014:13) mentions that in the case of an autobiographical narrator, the "epistemological position" that they adopt may be themselves at a different time, most commonly in the past. Since Augustine is both author and narrator of the *Confessions*, the lines between the authorial voice and first-person narrator often become blurred. However, I generally refer to 'Augustine' only as narrator and the image of the narrator that I extrapolate from the text, unless I am specifically referring to the historical author, and then I use 'historical Augustine' or the 'author Augustine'. I also distinguish the 'young Augustine' from 'Augustine' as narrator, for his past self that is narrated.[10]

I will also investigate the image of the reader that the author Augustine may have had in mind when writing the *Confessions*. Here I will make use of the concept of the 'implied reader' as described by Schmid (2014). According to Schmid (2014:1) the 'implied reader' in narratological analysis can be understood and modelled through the study of signs within the text. This entity is differentiated from the narratee of the work, which in the case of the *Confessions*, is God. Using Schmid's (2014:2) framework for apprehending the ideal reader of a text, I will study whether a Manichaean reader could potentially function as an ideal recipient of book 7 of the *Confessions*, as one who would understand this section of the *Confessions* in a way that matches its structure, who would have the ability to decode the subtext or figurative

[10] Some problems do arise with these designations, as the voice of the narrator often comes through in sections which depict the narrated Augustine's reflections, and more likely represent the author's current point of view. Again, autobiographical accuracy is probably not the primary purpose of the work, although on some level the reflections of the narrated Augustine would likely still represent the thoughts of his past self.

language in the text, and be familiar with the philosophical and religious deliberations put forward by Augustine.[11]

Chapter 2 of this thesis provides an exposition on the role of light and darkness in Manichaean religious thought in order to better grasp the elements in book 7 which might have special meaning to the potential Manichaean reader. Chapter 3 then analyses the extent to which Augustine might have used images of light and darkness in book 7 of his *Confessions*, as a means to communicate and appeal to his Manichaean readers. I examine various examples of light and darkness, as well as sight and blindness imagery, their surrounding context, and the possible message underlying the imagery. I then question how a Manichaean reader might react to the images in their context. This will provide a sound basis for identifying the extent to which the imagery contributes an overarching protreptic communicative purpose of the book. This study hopes to demonstrate that there is substantial evidence to support the notion that light and darkness imagery, as well as sight and blindness imagery, is used at this critical point in the autobiographical and conversion narrative of the *Confessions* because it would resonate especially well with a Manichaean audience, and that appealing to the Manichaeans to change their perception of God is key to protreptic communicative purpose of book 7. In this way, the present study hopes to contribute to the current argument in scholarship concerning the protreptic nature of the *Confessions* as a whole.

[11] While I take note of ancient metaphor theory, the use of an extensive theoretical framework on metaphors falls outside the scope of this study. The approach of narratology is furthermore better suited to the main research questions of this thesis. At a later stage, a study of Augustine's use of metaphor in light of ancient metaphor theory could yield fruitful results in a continued study of the imagery in the *Confessions*.

Chapter 2: Light and Darkness according to Manichaeism

2.1. Introduction

As seen in the previous chapter, in the last few decades of Augustinian scholarship, it has been increasingly realized that in order to understand Augustine and his works, one must first understand Manichaeism. Johannes van Oort affirms this, saying:

> "More and more clearly, modern research has revealed the extent to which Augustine's life and works are linked to Manichaeism. His theology and philosophy would be difficult to understand without a basic knowledge of the 'Religion of Light', its hymns and prayers, its ethical and dogmatic teaching, its mythology and theology" (Van Oort 1993:276-277).[12]

For this reason, before discussing the use of images of light and darkness in Augustine's *Confessions*, I will explore how light and darkness was conceptualized by the founder of Manichaeism, (Manichaeus, or Mani) and the followers of his religion. In so doing, I hope to better determine in the subsequent chapter whether the images of light and darkness in book 7 of the *Confessions* reference the Manichaean doctrine and religious practises, how the Manichaeans reading Augustine's *Confessions* might have interpreted his use of light and darkness imagery, and the possible contribution the images make towards the overarching communicative aim of the work.

2.2. The Founding of Manichaeism

The discussion of Manichaeism in this chapter sketches a broad background but highlights most significantly the central importance of light and darkness in Manichaean thought. The founding of the religion discussed in this section, and the more in-depth exploration of the Manichaean perception of light and darkness in section 2.3, provides a background without which it is impossible to understand the implications of Augustine's use of images of light and darkness in book 7 of the *Confessions*.

The question of the origins and influences in the founding of Mani's new religion has been investigated for years by scholars, a religion which, according to Eddy (2009:317), Mani presented as 'divinely-revealed' and universal in its intended scope. There was some consensus during the mid-twentieth century that Manichaeism was essentially a gnostic, dualistic Persian

[12] As quoted in BeDuhn's (2010:6) introduction to his book *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, I.*

religion, closely related to Zoroastrianism. However, Van Oort (2004:141) asserts that the murky origins of Manichaeism and its founder were elucidated with the discovery and publication of the *Cologne Mani Codex* (CMC) in the mid-1970s and most scholars now largely reject the previous suppositions about the origins of Manichaeism.

According to Van Oort (2013a:x), the finding of the *Cologne Mani Codex* revealed that Mani was raised in a Jewish-Christian Baptist community and scholars realised that it was Jewish-Christian ideas that helped to form early Manichaeism, rather than Zoroastrianism or Iranian dualism. This led to a major shift in Augustinian research, as it illustrated that Augustine's judgment of Manichaeism as a heretical sect of Christianity was valid, and scholars began to emphasize this point. Van Oort (2013a:xi) explains that Augustine always did regard Manichaeans as Christians, although errant in their beliefs and viewed Manichaeism, like the Donatist Church, as a considerable threat to Nicene Catholic Christianity. The awareness of this fact led to a change in modern readings of the *Confessions*, as more attention was paid to the vestiges of Manichaean thought in Augustine's modelling of Catholic Christian doctrine.

The CMC, written in Greek, is entitled "Concerning the Origin of his Body" and includes Mani's autobiographical comments on his upbringing in a Judeo-Christian Baptist community in Mardinu, Babylon, and how he came to the realisation of himself as a prophet. According to Van Oort (2009:127), the Baptist community that Mani was a part of was known as the Elchasaites and the group lived in accordance with the Jewish Law and traditions, such as honouring the Sabbath and performing daily ablutions on themselves and their food. However, they accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah. The Elchasaites were Judeo-Christian in, what Tardieu (1997:8) considers the strict sense: they were Christians living according to the prescriptions of the Torah. Drawing inspiration from the religion he grew up in, Mani was to both assimilate and challenge its system, and impose his own practises.

Tardieu (1997:14) points out that the beginning of Mani's apostolate as the founder of a new religion was formulated in the language of visions, with himself as executor of divine revelation. Since his early childhood, Mani was said to have been blessed with divine protection and instruction from "the strength of the angels of light," receiving visions and signs from "powers of holiness" (Tardieu 1997:9). Asmussen (1981:128) describes how the angel who bore the revelation was called *al-Tawm*, meaning 'companion' or 'twin', and this companion was apparently Mani's heavenly self. For twelve years Mani cultivated the secret wisdom revealed to him by his heavenly companion, and Tardieu (1997:10) explains that Mani gradually began to clash with his community, mostly with regard to their baptismal rituals and

practises. A second appearance from the angel *al-Tawm* occurred on Mani's twenty-fourth birthday, establishing a call for missionary work, which marked both Mani's rupture with the Elchasaites and the ecclesiastical birth of his new religion, Manichaeism.

Central to Mani's doctrine were the two active and separate realms of light and darkness, and the attribution of the fall of the soul to the attack of darkness upon the light. According to Brown (2000:45), Mani shared with other gnostic thinkers the view of man as a shameful mixture of these two opposing forces, but he explained this mixture in terms of a detailed description of the physical universe: all created matter was a result of this mixture, but pure light could be distilled from matter through grand, and rather bizarre, cosmic and internal processes. Sundermann, in his article on Manichaean cosmology and cosmogony for *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2011), provides a concise comparison between the Manichaean cosmology and that of the gnostic religions. He distinguishes Manichaeism from other gnostic teachings, which attributed the fall of the soul to a progressive degeneration of the light, rather than an attack of evil upon the light. Sundermann argues that the influence of Zoroastrianism is clear in the framework of cosmogonic events in Mani's creation myth. However, he argues that the contents of the myth differ largely between the two systems, and any similarities more closely reflect Iranian terminology than ideas. This indicates to me that Zoroastrianism is, arguably, the source for the fundamental position of light and darkness in Mani's doctrine, and Sundermann also asserts that the contents of the Manichaean myth reveal great similarities with the cosmogony and anthropological teachings of Bardesanes, suggesting that he was a source of inspiration for Mani. According to Tardieu (1997:32), the Manichaean *Book of Mysteries* indicates that Mani did indeed read and assimilate the philosophical treatises and sacred poems of Bardesanes.

2.2.1. The Religion of Light

It seems that from the very foundation of Mani's doctrine and formulation of God, light held a fundamental place. According to Scibona (2001:447) in the prologue of the *Living Gospel*, Mani portrays himself as directly derived from God, the Father of Greatness himself, whom he calls the "God of Light." Mani further called his religion the "Religion of Light" and himself the "Apostle of Light". In order to better understand Mani's claims, some key elements of the Manichaean myth must be highlighted. Sundermann (1991) describes how the Father of Greatness who ruled the realm of light brought forth a series of emanations, which resulted in Jesus the Splendour being called forth. Jesus the Splendour in turn brought forth the Light-*Nous*, who called forth the Apostle of Light. During the course of world history this divine

apostle became incarnate in great religious leaders, such as the Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and finally in Mani. Sundermann (2002) points out that the presence of the Light-*Nous* within Mani meant the very presence of God within him. This was tantamount to being bestowed with divine wisdom and virtue.

Van Oort (2004:148) asserts that when Mani assumed the title of "Apostle", he considered himself the apostle of his age in this long line of apostles sent forth from Jesus the Splendour, rather than an apostle of the historical Jesus. Mani believed that the teachings revealed to him were the ultimate and universal truth and, as spiritual heir to Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus, his religion carried with it all the wisdom and knowledge of the world. As Van Oort (2004:146) points out, Mani considered himself the Seal of the Prophets.[13] Another term that Mani bestowed upon himself, according to Tardieu (1997:36) was the "Paraclete promised by Jesus." In a Christian context, the word paraclete is found in the Gospel of John and it is generally held that it refers to the third trinitarian identity, the Holy Spirit, or to the presence of Jesus in the world after his ascension into heaven.[14] Mani seems to have assimilated this identity of the paraclete.[15] Van Oort (2004:147) argues that the identity of Paraclete, rather than reinforcing Mani's connection with Jesus, further entrenched Mani's special association with the Light-*Nous*, and the embodiment of *gnosis*.

Chadwick (2009:13) describes how Mani and his followers considered themselves to be the *veri Christiani* and, accordingly, their Church was the *vera ecclesia.* Mani thus aimed at supplementing and correcting Christians with a final revelation about the meaning of the sacred books. According to Asmussen (1981:128), for Mani it was imperative for the successful continuation of his religion to develop his own written tradition and in an attempt to reach as many diverse groups of people as possible, he documented what was revealed to him in a "deliberately syncretistic way," by writing in Syriac. Reeves (2011:150) expresses how Mani's books were accorded the status of revelatory literature by his followers, and these holy books

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[13] G.G. Stroumsa (1986:61) elaborates on the doctrine of the seal of prophecy and describes how it is a title used in the Qur'an to designate the prophet Muhammad and is generally regarded to mean that Muhammad was the last of the prophets sent by Allah. According to Tardieu (1007:16), the doctrine of the seal of prophecy is also a fundamental aspect of Judeo-Christianity, and Mani would have been familiar with it from his Baptist upbringing and education.

[14] John 14:16-17 and 14:26: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to help you and be with you forever- the Spirit of Truth…But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV. 2011 Biblica, Inc.)

[15] It is uncertain whether Mani therefore considered himself the Holy Spirit, and thus divine, or whether he meant that the Holy Spirit dwelt within him. According to Van Oort (2004:154) both are correct.

certainly became an effective spiritual tool in the spread of the religion. Mani himself authored seven books which served as the canon for his religion, and his followers placed great importance on their accurate preservation and reproduction.[16]

Tardieu (1997:18) notes that Mani was in keeping with the prophetology of the Elchasaites, in that they both drew from the books of the apocalypticians, as well as the Christology of the sayings of Jesus. Tardieu adds, however, that Mani and his followers, like the Gnostics, rejected most of the Old Testament, with its creator God and supposedly cruel stories, as well as what they considered to be 'corrupt' Jewish interjections into the New Testament. These included the certain narratives of Matthew and Luke, and any other texts which were at variance with Manichaean doctrine. Moiseeva (2017:199) reviews textual evidence from various Manichaean books which indicate to her that Jewish literature, especially Genesis, should in fact be counted among sources of Manichaeism. She also notes that motifs, terms, and rituals from Iranian, Mesopotamian, and Christian sources (particularly from Paul's letters) can also certainly be identified as the basis for Mani's ideas (2017:200). It appears that Mani developed his new religion in a manner consistent and at the same time in contrast with the religion in which he grew up and that Manichaeism developed from a complex blend of apocalyptic Judeo-Christian asceticism, with Gnostic-dualist and esoteric elements.

Mani's religion gained support through the development of a firm interior organization of followers and system of doctrines, which Asmussen (1981:128) argues was rich in possibilities of accommodation and alterations. Eminent missionaries were capable of making Manichaeism immediately attractive to people of all walks of life, and the spread of Manichaeism was therefore expansive. According to Sundermann (2011), Mani claimed that, on account of his being bestowed with *gnosis*, his teaching would provide the answer to all the riddles in the world, to existential questions about the origins of evil, as well as man's purpose on earth. Chadwick (2009:14) adds that Manichaean missionaries received from Mani direct revelation on these 'truths' and went on to present Mani's mythology as 'scientific' knowledge, witnessable in the physical world, and in stark contrast to the mere faith expected by the Christian Church. Brown (2000:34) mentions that congregations of 'Hearers' gathered around the Elect, impressed by their austerity and spiritual superiority, and drawn in by their air of

[16] According to Reeves (2011:249), Manichaeism has come to be known as "une religion du Livre," a term coined by Henri-Charles Peuch (1949).

mystery, complicated secret prayers, and hint of a deeper message behind their teachings about Light and Darkness.[17]

As Kotzé (2004:90) suggests, Manichaeism was clearly appealing to men of high intellectual ability, like the young Augustine, who were seeking philosophical or religious direction and were attracted to the promise of knowledge and wisdom. The Manichaeans flaunted their intellectualism, which included sharp appraisal of other beliefs, pious and repetitive use of the name of Christ, and quotations from scripture. According to Kotzé, a large measure of their success was their organisation into small groups, or cells, which fostered intellectual discussion and a close sense of community. The influence of this is evident in Augustine's lifelong preoccupation with the Manichaeans, and the fact that he remained friends with some of them long after his conversion to Christianity.

In her article on the influence of Manichaeism on Augustine's stance on spiritual mentorship, McCann (2009:257) mentions that Augustine was later critical of the Manichaeans for their pride in the supposed truth of their teachings, their elitism with regard to the divide between Hearer and Elect members of the church, and their smugness in their ability to win arguments against Catholics and persuade people to join the sect. He was furthermore sensitive towards his own propensity for falling into the sin of pride in his knowledge. As I demonstrate in the third chapter of this thesis, Augustine warns in book 7 of the *Confessions* against teachings that proclaim truth but in fact deceive those who listen, directing his warning specifically at the Manichaeans.

The above discussion on the source of inspiration for the founding of the sect, and the syncretistic nature of the "Religion of light", underlines how Manichaeism was in many respects similar to Christianity and therefore highly successful in winning over many Christians. It also reveals some important deviations of Manichaeism away from orthodox Christianity, which Augustine brings to the fore in his refutation of Manichaean theology in book 7, and in his teaching of what he advocates as the true Christian theology. Augustine uses many concepts which would be familiar to the Manichaeans, but transfers these to a Neoplatonic-Christian point of view. In this way he attempts to reveal the errors in the Manichaean interpretation of, and divergence from, Christian concepts and traditions.

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[17] According to Asmussen (1981:123), Mani is well-remembered, not only as a prophet, but also as a painter. Asmussen mentions that this impression of Mani is drawn from his literary tradition, his care and interest in paper, writing, and illustrations, and in his *Ardhang*, or picture book.

Augustine then offers what he deems the true teachings behind the Christian message. Having provided a brief background on the founding of this "Religion of light," I turn now to a discussion on the main aspects of the Manichaean doctrine, including their cosmological myth and their soteriology, which were intrinsically shaped by the notions of light and darkness.

2.3. How the Manichaeans Perceived Light and Darkness

In this section I examine the Manichaean creation myth more closely and unpack their view of the nature of God as Light, the soul, and the origin of evil. This is crucial in order to draw conclusions about how light and darkness were understood by the Manichaeans as both divine and physical realities, and to provide a backdrop in the next chapter for determining a Manichaean subtext beneath Augustine's use of light and darkness imagery in book 7 of his *Confessions*.

Manicheism offered a detailed cosmological myth, which is known for its essential dualism in the battle between Light and Darkness, and which involves the loss of the particles of Light, the Living Soul, to powers of Darkness, and the demonic creation of the first humans. Baker-Brian (2011:96) argues that the narrative itself served as the fundamental feature of Mani's teachings, in the sense that it supplied the principal point of departure for Mani's theology. Baker-Brian asserts that the myth existed in a reciprocal relationship with the ascetic practises of the church, where the myth supplied the configuration of the universe necessary for the performance of salutary rituals and their continuation through history.

Mani's approach to myth appears to be far removed from the philosophical presumptions of the classical approach, where myths and epics were read according to their hidden meaning or deeper message. According to Baker-Brian (2011:100), the Manichaean myth was a literal and descriptive account of the way things are, and as mentioned above, it seems that Mani intended his myth to be received as a genuine and scientific explanation of the workings of the universe. Baker-Brian (2011:105) mentions that an important aspect of Mani's self-proclaimed role as provider of truth, concerned his role as physician. Mani claimed to provide remedies and answers to individual and collective suffering, to the reasons for the presence of corruption, sickness, death, and evil in the world, and the means to salvation. According to Baker-Brian (2011:104), Manichaeans were inclined to regard their apostle as one who revealed profound truths and as the mediator of literally life-saving knowledge thus far undisclosed.

As I discuss in Chapter 3 of this thesis, this aspect lay the groundwork for much of the critique that Augustine launches against the Manichaeans in the *Confessions*. He mentions that while

he was still a Manichaean, he began to realise that their teachings were not as philosophical as he had initially believed, and when faced with difficult theological problems, he felt their literal explanations fell short.[18] In the *Confessions*, Augustine stresses the allegorical and figurative nature of scripture, deep within in which lies eternal and divine truth, which only the humble can attain.

2.3.1. The Material Realms of Light and Darkness

Since the Manichaean myth was to be taken literally, it is commonly held by scholars that rather than symbolic conceptions of God as light and evil as darkness, the Manichaeans conceived the realm of light and of darkness, and the emanations associated with the two realms, in a distinctly physical sense and they are certainly described this way. Brown (2000:39) elaborates on the Manichaean notion of God as the ruler of the realm of light, understood not as a metaphysical God, but one who pervaded three dimensions of the universe with his particles of light, almost akin to sunlight. As Leurini (2009:171) points out, both realms were positioned in very specific positions in the cosmic order. The realm of light was positioned above all other components of the universe, quite literally in terms of spatial distance, and was furnished with a distinctly 'earthly' structure: it had a sky, earth, mountain, hills, trees which bore fruit and flowers, and rivers of nectar. These features reinforce the impression of the materiality of the Manichaean conception of heaven, the dwelling place of God.

Aspects of the Manichaean conception of the realm of light and darkness are not purely material, however. Eddy (2009:319) describes how the Manichaeans considered the realm of light to be the source of truth, goodness, beauty, and soul, while the realm of darkness was the source of wickedness, falsehood, hostility, and matter. The good nature, the Father of Greatness, resided in the realm of light with his five dwellings: mind, knowledge, intellect, thought and reflection. Although he was not thought of as a metaphysical God, he nevertheless seems to possess certain qualities of a transcendent divine being. Furthermore, Pedersen (2011:230) describes how the Manichaeans believed that their God was covered by a veil and, although he existed in a material realm, he would not be visible to mankind or to his emanations until the end of times when he would reveal himself. This veil was in place to preserve the

[18] This is most clear in Augustine's depiction of his meeting with Faustus in *Confessions* 5.6.10-5.7.13, and his disappointment that Faustus could not answer his questions to any satisfaction. After meeting Ambrose in Milan, however, Augustine says that he realised even more the inadequacy of Manichaean teachings and decided to leave the sect indefinitely (*Confessions* 5.14.25).

peace, goodness, and tranquilly of the light and prevent it from being involved with darkness. Nevertheless, God was certainly visible to mankind through his emanations.

2.3.2. The Question of God's Supremacy

Augustine, in book 7.1.1 of his *Confessions*, outlines the characteristics he fundamentally believes God must possess: God must be inviolable, imperishable, and unchangeable (*et te incorruptibilem et inviolabilem et incommutabilem totis medullis credebam*). By the end of the book, he comes to a conception of God, in terms of light, and a conception on the nature and origin of evil, which adheres to the characteristics of God as inviolable, imperishable, and unchangeable. I examine now the Manichaean theology, in order to determine in the subsequent chapter whether Augustine's insistence in these characteristics carries any allusions to Manichaeism.

The question of whether both the principles of light and darkness were considered equal as God, or whether only the light was God is still much discussed by scholars, mostly in terms of whether Manichaeism can be considered monotheistic in the Judeo-Christian sense, or whether Manichaeism was purely a dualistic religion. According to Sundermann's (2011) summary of the Manichaean cosmology and cosmogony, both the principals of light and darkness were conceptualized by Mani as increate and without beginning. Manichaeism has consequently been described as an essentially dualistic religion and like other dualistic religions, Manichaeism promised the ultimate victory of light over darkness, and the overcoming of the imperfect state of the world. However, it can be argued that Manichaeism does not fit quite so comfortably in a dualistic box. Tardieu (1997:81) prefers the expression "dialectical game" to describe the combat between light and darkness in the Manichaean creation myth, rather than metaphysical dualism. He argues that the two fundamental principles of light and darkness were actually not thought of by the Manichaeans as equally powerful and eternal, and only the light principal, the Father of Greatness, was considered God.

Scibona (2001) writes a highly informative article on the issue of the monotheism and dualism of Manichaeism, and argues that from the very beginning of Manichaeism, 'theological monotheism' and 'ontological dualism' were coherent elements in its gnostic conception of reality (2001:444). She argues that Manichaeism can be considered dualistic because it revolves around the two principles, whether coeternal or not, which determine and qualify the reality of the world, all that exists, and how it manifests itself. Scibona (2001:448) further underscores the gnostic quality of Manichaean dualism, based on the opposition of these two

principles and the diminution of the light, whose omnipotence is "reduced to the omniscience of an eschatological victory" and therefore to the power of organising history to such an end. Scibona (2001:447) asserts that the "ontological negativity" of the cosmos and the body become necessary instruments of purification and salvation of the light, the aim of which is to restore the power of the light, the only God. It is the glorification and ultimate victory of the Father of Greatness that gives rise to explicit monotheistic expressions, which Scibona (2001:456) argues are founded on the ontological difference from, and opposition to, darkness and matter, as well as the consubstantiality with the light's own emanations imprisoned in mankind and the cosmos. This Manichaean monotheism undeniably diverges from the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity.[19] Scibona (2001:462) concludes that Manichaean monotheism, or rather the principle of light, although unique in its substance, is defined through its relationship with evil matter, as light in darkness. This particular character of Manichaean monotheism as well as the profoundly gnostic essence of Manichaean religion lead Scibona to conclude the theological monotheism and a dualistic ontology of the Manichaean system.

Other scholars have come to similar conclusions regarding the theological monotheism and dualistic ontology of Manichaeism. For example, Van Oort (2012:210) describes how the Manichaean bishop Faustus defended Manichaeism and asserted that the King of darkness shared no attributes with the one true God of light, and although the realms of light and darkness both existed eternally, they were clearly distinct. Alexander (2011:184) indicates that many of the Gnostic writers had an anti-Judaic stance to their dualism and their argument that evil in the world arose from a separate power of darkness, and it seems Mani adopted the same standpoint. According to Brown (2000:36), in Manichaeism, God was kept totally good and innocent and excluded from any responsibility for evil in the world. This safeguarded his goodness, supposedly more piously than monotheism in the Judeo-Christian sense.

Added to this, Tardieu (1997:81) asserts that the role of darkness in the cosmological myth was not to challenge the transcendence and supremacy of the Father of Greatness, but instead to serve as parasitic (though absolutely necessary) foils to the work of God. The Manichaeans believed that the powers of darkness were chaotic in nature, bellicose, and far inferior in wisdom to the Father of Greatness and his emanations. They justified the capture of light as a 'victory in defeat' and as proof to the pious Manichaean that God was good, sacrificing parts

[19] Concerning the phenomenon of monotheism in the field of religious studies, Scibona (2001:456) mentions the evaluation by Pettazzoni (1922, 1955), who defined monotheism in his two important volumes, as a specific historical fact occurring only in Judaism (and by derivation in Christianity and Islam) and Zoroastrianism.

of himself for the greater gain, as well as superior in wisdom. Tardieu (1997:81) judges that Mani had no need to devise an original demonology, and the one gleaned from Judeo-Christian literature amply sufficed for his main purpose of elaborating his theogony. Furthermore, Bennett (2011:428) elaborates on the Manichaean eschatology and points out that in the final time, the light particles would become finally removed from darkness, and therefore ultimately triumph. Bennett describes how the forces of darkness, having been separated from the light they had captured, would be punished and imprisoned forever in a globular mass called the *bolos*.

To Augustine, and others who analysed the myth with sharp criticism, the intermingling of light with dark was an expression of God's weakness and represented what Asmussen (1981:138) terms an "insoluble dilemma". Augustine raises the subject in *Confessions* 7.2.3 and reasons that if God could lose particles of himself, and it is admitted that God can be injured and exposed to destruction, then God cannot be considered omnipotent. However, if it is argued that God cannot be injured in the whole process, then it must be explained why he engaged with the agents of darkness in the first place, leaving particles of himself for enemies to destroy, violate, and thereby forced into committing sin. [20] Augustine is demonstrating through clear proofs that this God is not all powerful or good if he did not foresee the destruction and suffering of the particles of himself.

Bennett (2011:433) investigates Augustine's criticism of the Manichaean doctrine and eschatology, and mentions that, according to Augustine, the Manichaean doctrine requires that God be spatially confined and subject to division. Bennett points out that the Manichaean teachings about a portion of the light being seized and corrupted seem to assume that God was a material substrate that could be divided into parts that were confined in space. This would reduce God to the level of matter, and, coupled with the fact that the Father of Greatness needed

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[20] Augustine *Confessions* 7.2.3: *quid erat tibi factura nescio qua gens tenebrarum…si tu cum ea pugnare noluisses? si enim responderetur, aliquid fuisse nocituram, violabilis tu et corruptibilis fores. si autem nihil ea nocere potuisse diceretur, nulla afferretur causa pugnandi, et ita pugnandi, ut quaedam portio tua…misceretur adversis potestatibus…atque in tantum ab eis corrumperetur et commutaretur in deterius, ut…egeret auxilio, quo erui purgarique posset* ("Those so-called powers of darkness…what would they have done to you if you had refused to fight? If the reply is that they could have inflicted some injury on you, it would imply that you are subject to violation and therefore destructible. If, on the other hand, it is denied that they had power to injure you, there would have been no point in fighting. And yet the fighting is alleged to have been so intense that some portion of yourself…became entangled with hostile powers…and was by them so far corrupted and changed for the worse that…it could be rescued and purified only with help").
All translations of the *Confessions* in this thesis are credited to: Boulding, M. (trans). 2012. *Augustine. Confessions*. 2nd Edition. New York: New City Press, and the Latin text to O'Donnell's online text (1992): http://www.stoa.org/hippo/text7.html.

humans and inferior realities for the liberation of particles of Himself, is incongruent with the idea of a supreme deity. According to Brown (2000:41) every writing of Mani's illustrates that the light is essentially passive and impinged upon by the violent activity of darkness. Brown (2000:42) adds that, while the forces of darkness were an active force driven by uncontrollable desire, God was "of so untarnished an innocence" that He was precariously close to losing His potency.

In book 7, Augustine establishes the utter transcendence, immateriality, and incorruptibility of God, opposes a duality of divine substance, and asserts that evil is only the perversion of will away from God. Augustine then includes a discussion how this God can be envisaged and how a relationship with God can be achieved. I turn now to the understanding in Manichaeism about the emanations of the Light and how followers of Manichaeism believed their God could be perceived, so that I better evaluate the possible appeal to the Manichaeans in Augustine's delineation of a theory of illumination and knowledge of God in book 7, as well as his appraisal of the belief that God could be seen with the bodily eyes.

2.3.3. Emanations of the Light

The cosmological myth which Mani set out reflects the very extent of the engagement between the two principles of light and darkness, and it appears that the myth was applied to all other areas of Manichaean doctrine. Baker-Brian (2011:108) argues that the myth offered the "basic data" for the Manichaean teachings on the origin of mankind, the nature of existence, and their anthropology. Thus, the tension between light and darkness pervaded every aspect of Manichaean thought.

Tardieu (1997) provides a useful summary of the Manichaean creation myth using the late eighth century historian Theodore bar Konai's account, which itself was based on a Syriac copy of Mani's *Pragmateia* and stands today as the most complete version of the Manichaean myth, as Mani had conceived and written it (1997:75). According to the myth, the king of the realm of darkness saw the beauty of the realm of light and, filled with desire, planned to launch an attack. To counter the destructive powers of darkness, the Father of Greatness issued three series of Calls, which form the very heart of the Manichaean mythological system. The three series of Calls all resolve in light elements being called forth or 'created' (Tardieu 1997:86). It is important to note that all these evocations were derived from the Father, that is, the original light itself, and were identical to the Father in nature.

Sundermann (2002) notes that Mani avoids the term creation, with its connotations from *Genesis*, and uses the formulation "Call," or "evocation by creative word," which results in a hypostasis. Baker-Brian (2011:110) draws attention to the fact that Mani also avoided any connotations of reproduction in the creations by the Father of Greatness, likely in order to leave the Father's "immaculate divinity unsullied". On the contrary, I notice that the creation of man by the demonic creatures of darkness is described in decidedly sensual and procreative terms, probably entrenching the fundamental differences between the two natures of light and darkness, good and evil.

According to Tardieu's summary of the myth (1997:86), the three series of Calls consist of the following being called forth: 1) indecomposable elements of light, 2) personified emanations of light with cosmic functions, and 3) personified intellectual faculties of light. Tardieu argues that these represent the three possible modes for followers of Manichaeism to apprehend the nature of light: physics, cosmology, and psychology. An understanding of these three calls, and the way the Manichaeans perceived emanations of light, aids my analysis in chapter 3 of the way the potential Manichaean reader might interpret Augustine's own description of how God can be encountered. As I discuss in the next chapter, Augustine's quest for God is described in the *Confessions* in terms which denote that God is *not* to be conceived physically, that is, not in a physical-material way such as the Manichaeans perceived the divine light. However, he retains the image of light and darkness to describe God and his journey to God.

Tardieu (1997:76) describes how, rather than going into battle himself and disrupting the peacefulness of his dwellings, the Father of Greatness initiated the First Call. One of his evocations, Primal Man, was sent to battle the malevolent forces of darkness, which threatened to infiltrate the realm of light. Smagina (2011:207) indicates that Primal Man was armed with five armaments or garments of light, which were also called the sons of Primal Man or the Living Soul. These elements of light were air, wind, water, fire, and light. It is significant to note what Ebert (2011:309) points out, namely that the five elements of light, or the Living Soul, were portrayed in Sogdian texts as "the gods of this world," affirming their shared nature with the Father of Greatness and the realm of light. According to Tardieu (1997:83), the powers of darkness consisted of the archons, which were themselves armed with an entourage of dark elements smoke, wind, water, fire, and darkness. During combat, the garments of light were offered to the archons, and were consequently swallowed and ingested into the "cosmic belly" of darkness, thus becoming mixed and imprisoned with their unclean counterparts.

Tardieu (1997:87) argues that the first series of Calls hereby consists of the Manichaean conception of light and darkness as physical essences: the fundamental and indecomposable elements of light and darkness that fill up the atmosphere. Ebert (2011:309) describes how the five garments of light (air, wind, light, water and fire) were conceived as the living and conscious light elements "of great fineness and purity" imprisoned in the darkness. They thus became the part of the realm of light whose retrieval from darkness was the reason for the world's existence and duration. The Living Soul was essentially God suffering in the world, and as we shall see, was consubstantial with the souls imprisoned in created beings, whose suffering appears to be the very centre of Manichaean teachings.

Ebert (2011:310) asserts that the garments of light were thought to give structure to all living beings, constantly giving life to all creatures, letting plants proliferate and prosper, and even helping during the birth of human beings. They were furthermore responsible for the beauty and peace of all living beings. However, Leurini (2009:177) asserts that for Mani and his followers, these garments, or the Living Soul, were still considered physical essences of light particles, derived from the realm of light.

The second series of Calls describes how the universe emerged and evolved. Tardieu (1997:77) describes how the Father of Greatness initiated the 'Second Call' to rescue Primal Man, which resulted in the Friend of Lights, the Great Builder and the Living Spirit with his five sons being called. After rescuing Primal Man, the archons were slayed and their corpses, together with the ingested light particles, were thrown into the realm of darkness forming eight layers of earth, and from their skins they formed eleven heavens. Gardner (2013:80) considers it to be especially noteworthy that this act of 'creation' of the universe was performed by emanations from the realm of light, and not by an evil demiurge. Thus, in Manichaeism, unlike most other Gnostic systems, the universe was a divine construction. The *design* of creation was therefore considered good, and it would become a machine for the purification of light particles. In order to create the cosmos, however, materials of a mixed substance had to be used (particles of light and slayed archons).

Kósa (2015:257) describes how the cosmos was established for two purposes: it served as a gigantic prison for the captured archons, and as a 'hospital' to heal and liberate the trapped Light particles. This separation was crucial as the light elements, collectively called the Living Soul, apparently suffered immensely in being attached to the dark elements, and this suffering is described in detail in various Manichaean texts. The healing function of the cosmos also required carefully constructed mechanisms to aid the process of separating the light from dark

elements. According to the myth, the Living Spirit therefore revealed himself to the captured archons, which caused them to emit some of the light elements from the garments of Primal Man that they had swallowed. From this, the Living Spirit brought about the first filtering of light, the sun and moon (Tardieu 1997:78). With the world so constructed, the process of salvation could begin.

To this end a third evocation of deities occurred. The Father of Greatness called forth the Third Messenger, who called the Twelve Virgins of Light (royalty, wisdom, innocence, persuasion, purity, firmness, faith, endurance, uprightness, goodness, justice, and light). The Third Messenger set the healing mechanism of the sun and moon in motion, and called the Column of Glory, also known as Perfect Man or Jesus the Splendour, who, as mentioned in the previous section, called forth the Light-*Nous* (Tardieu 1997:79). In the next stage of the myth, the Third Messenger and Twelve Virgins revealed themselves to the archons, causing them to emit more particles of light. However, the light that was expelled from the bodies of the archons was mixed with some of their own sin, and this mixture fell to earth, becoming demons, plants and animals (Tardieu 1997:79).

Brown (2000:46) highlights the importance of the celestial bodies the sun and moon in the transportation of light elements from earth back to the realm of light, whereby the waxing and waning of the moon was thought to be caused by the flux of these particles. This process was visible to humans, whereby not only these vessels could be seen, but also the divine Living soul itself that was carried, in that it was made up of the five light-elements. Brown adds that the sun and the moon were themselves considered to be made from pure light, having been formed from the particles of light completely unaffected by darkness, and the Manichaeans thus viewed them as in some sense divine. Gardner (2013:78) describes how the sun and moon were also thought to be the dwellings (or palaces and thrones) for the emanated gods at work in the cosmos. The Manichaeans were thus promised that they could see particles of God by directing their gaze towards the sun and moon, witnessing the visible manifestation of the purified Living Soul in its ascent, as well as the gods in their palaces. However, the Father of Greatness in his realm of light always remained inaccessible. According to Gardner (2013:80) this was because the Father must be kept separate from the realm of conflict. That the Father was ‘a hidden one,’ was one of the primary characteristics of Manichaean theology.

Gardner (2013:74) describes how the Manichaeans offered up daily prayers to the sun and moon. Kósa adds that the sun is described in the Manichaean texts as illuminating the world, flooding “beauty and loveliness upon all creatures,” “peace to people”, releasing the Living

Soul from the "bonds and fetters of heaven and earth," and providing "a scent and a taste to the entire Cross of the Light" (2015:259). The planets and stars, however, were considered evil because they were created from light material contaminated with darkness. As Kósa (2015:257) points out, plants and animals too were thought to contain varying amounts of light particles within the darkness that was their matter, with plants containing far more light than animals. Since darkness was considered the cause of evil, some animals like snakes and scorpions were considered evil because of the pain that they could inflict on other creatures.

Kósa (2015:260-261) explains that Mani even ascribed certain natural phenomena, such as clouds to the archons (fire, wind, water, light, air). These archons supposedly inhabited clouds and the signs of their presence were lightning, thunder and wind. When they stripped themselves from the clouds, which the Virgin of Light forces them to do in order to purify the atmosphere, they left behind the disastrous effect of natural phenomena like frost and snow that lay waste to crops, as well as stormy seas and huge waves which destroy ships. According to the narrative, Mani explains the relevance of clouds after observing some actual clouds in the sky. This setting therefore reinforces that all the natural phenomena mentioned in his subsequent exposition must be taken literally and recognised as part of the necessary continuous process of the purification of light from darkness.

The particles of light, the Living Soul, were afflicted by their contact with matter and Fuhrer (2013b:62) describes how phenomena like hunger, thirst, madness, sleep, drunkenness, and even death were thought to be evidence of the condition of the light's imprisonment in darkness. Fuhrer (2013b:61) makes the informative point that, while these phenomena were 'images' of the cosmological situation related to "perdition or redemption," they were more than just symbols or metaphors, but "empirical elements" and direct evidence of the events of the myth and the struggle between light and darkness. Fuhrer calls them "symptoms" of the myth in which, for example, light and the sun were elements in the myth, but also images of the process of acquiring knowledge; and sleep was an image of the imprisonment of light particles, but also an experienced condition that is explained by the myth. Fuhrer adds that this may be the reason why the Manichaeans were opposed to an allegorical interpretation of the elements of their myth, as these elements served as documents of the reality of the world.

Kósa (2015:264) affirms that every aspect of nature was involved in the antagonistic relationship between light and darkness, hidden from most people, but revealed by Mani's teachings. Natural processes which were discernible to everybody served as evidence for believers that the basic notion of the mixed light being constantly purified via the Column of

Glory, the moon, and the sun was accurate and that the meaning and relevance of the believers' life was verifiable. Gardner (2013:75) describes how truth was not something that needed to be believed by faith, nor proved by discursive reasoning. It could be seen by the eyes. Mani promised his followers that truth could be seen by 'eye-revelation' and that the mysteries of the wisdom of God were attainable by man. Brown (2000:46) asserts that no religious system had ever treated the visible world so drastically as an externalisation of an inner, spiritual conflict, but that the Manichaeans would never concede that their picture of the universe was a myth symbolising some deeper truth.

There is an essential difference between the interpretive possibilities between the Manichaean language and elements of their myth, and the language which Augustine uses to describe his vision of God in the *Confessions*. Through the three calls of the Manichaean myth, light could be perceived through physical elements of light (air, wind, water, fire, and light), through the cosmic functions of the sun and moon, and psychologically through the salutary rituals in which followers of Manichaeism participated and knowledge of which was revealed through the Light-*Nous* and the teachings of Mani (described in detail below in section 2.3.4). While the Father of Greatness could not be seen, the symptoms of the conflict between light and darkness were perceivable in the physical world through the senses- predominantly through the eyes (by looking up at the sky), but also by listening to hymns, and tasting fruit and vegetables. Light particles made up the natural world, as well as the souls of living creatures, and was a material quality. Nevertheless, Baker-Brian (2011:111) notes that light was different in nature and a different type of substance to its dark rival, matter. Brown (2000:75) describes how most thinkers at that time, including Manichaeans, Stoics and everyday Christians, were materialists in that they believed God to be a substance, though exceptionally "fine" and "noble." It was only really the Platonists, and the Platonist-Christians who thought of God as a metaphysical reality, the historical Augustine among this group. In book 7 of his *Confessions*, Augustine uses the image of 'seeing' God, and the image of God as light, in a purely figurative sense, and stresses the very immateriality of God's light which can only been 'seen' through the spiritual senses and the mind.

2.3.4. The Creation of Man

In the grand battle between Light and Darkness, the creation of Adam and Eve held an auxiliary function, as an attempt at retaliation by the powers of darkness. Asmussen (1981:129) calls it a "tragic ploy" by the two demonic creatures of darkness, who were attempting to maintain their clutch on particles of the true light by imprisoning them in the dark confines of a physical

body. According to Mani, the mixture of Light and Darkness that fell to earth and became demons, recalled and longed for the form of the Messenger that they had seen. Two of these demonic creatures, Ashaqlun and Nebroel, responded to one another and came together. Nebroel conceived of him and gave birth to a son, whom she called Adam. She then conceived and gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Eve (Tardieu 1997:80).

Thus, it was that these two demons, incarnations of the principle of darkness itself, fashioned the first two people on earth in the image of an emanation of the light. The creation of man can in this way be viewed as a twisted version of *imago dei*, but it was not creation by the supreme good God, the Father of Greatness. Sundermann (2018) indicates that since the Father of Greatness was not the creator of man, he was therefore not charged with being the originator of evil in mankind nor in the world, but as mentioned above, to critics of Manichaeism he was certainly charged with powerlessness.[21]

Adam and Eve were born from the lust of the demons, but according to Eddy (2009:320), part of their soul (the "good soul") contained particles of imprisoned light, and so each human being was a mixture of good and evil, soul and matter, light and darkness. Asmussen (1981:139) describes how, when a man committed sin, it was considered by Manichaeans to be caused by the dark active power within man's very nature, rather than his free will. Eddy (2009:320) mentions that, like other demonstrations of Gnosticism, Manichaeism naturally depended upon a strong determinism in terms of their doctrine of salvation, wherein free will had no place. Matter was considered the basis of all phenomena of evil, and was not understood as a passive form, but continually inspired by destructive energy and death.

One of the most obvious effects of the influence of the powers of darkness on humanity was lust, which both derives from and leads toward the reproduction of matter. Eddy (2009:320) describes how this sexual impulse, irrational and aggressive, was thought to disturb the tranquillity of the human being, and like the realm of darkness from which it originated, it longed to be gratified and to disrupt the pure and unblemished light soul. This decidedly negative view of the body and concupiscence was one of the aspects of Manichaean doctrine

[21] One must perhaps take into account that in the myth, Mani's selects the word "Call" for the various creations and emanations by the agents of Light, but this word is notably absent in the creation of the first humans by the demons (the demons are simply described as coming together, conceiving, and bearing Adam and Eve). Mani perhaps drew inspiration from Genesis where Adam was given the power to name all the organisms in the world and thus given power over them. Calling something by name denotes having power over them, and, if one does suppose that Mani knew these implications of the word "Call", then one could argue in favour of the Manichaean God's potency in that Mani ensured that the demons, who performed no 'Calls', had less active power over their earthly creations than the Light had over its emanations, which included the light soul within mankind.

which scholars argue remained in the historical Augustine's thought from his time as a Manichaean.[22]

Tardieu (1997:80-81) elaborates that in order to redeem the light souls from this state of chaos and corruption, the Father of Greatness discharged another recovery mechanism. He sent Jesus the Splendour to awaken Adam, and to enlighten him to the true source of the light soul that was trapped in his material body. He revealed to the first humans the true knowledge, the secret *gnosis*, and the manner in which they might participate in the recovery of light, while the celestial bodies continued to collect and absorb particles of light in the universe and transport them back to the heavenly realm of light from which they came.

Adam and Eve eventually copulated, however, and produced more human beings, trapping the light in bodies of mankind throughout human history. Eddy (2009:320) describes how the Manichaeans believed that through continuous fragmentation of the light soul within mankind by means of procreation, the dark powers endeavoured to hinder redemption of the soul from the imprisonment of the human body. The appearance of the Prophet Mani was considered another attempt by the realm of light to reveal to mankind the true source of the spiritual light imprisoned within their material bodies.

Since the Light-*Nous* played a crucial role in enlightening Adam, and the subsequent Apostles of Light, by providing them with *gnosis*, the light can be considered to have a psychological or metaphysical manifestation, like the *logos* in Greek philosophy. As Tardieu (1997:87) posits, the 'Third Call' represents the psychological basis in the Manichaean conception of light, in that light as 'personified intellectual faculties' were called forth with a purely soteriological function, in order to further the process of liberation of light particles from the world. This is further evidenced in that people who showed qualities such as virtue, justice, wisdom, endurance etc. were thought to have received these qualities from the Virgins of Light, which represent the purity, goodness, and tranquillity of the realm of light. As Sundermann (2002) notes, the Manichaeans considered these faculties within other people or themselves as coming from the light soul within them, having been received when Jesus the Splendour provided Adam, and his progeny, with *gnosis*.

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[22] Eddy (2009:331) states in his article on the charge of crytpo-Manichaeism against Augustine that: "Following Julian, by far and away the area of Augustine's thought most commonly identified by contemporary scholars as beholden to his former Manichaean worldview is the nest of theological ideas revolving around his conceptions of sin and the fall, specifically his notion of concupiscence."

2.3.5. A Man's Life on Earth

The following section outlines the pervasive awareness of the suffering of light particles in the daily life of the Manichaeans and brings into focus how a Manichaean could achieve the liberation of these divine particles from their imprisonment in matter. In book 7, Augustine describes in figurative language how he came from a condition of darkness and blindness to a vision of the light and the truth about God, an illuminating experience which in Manichaeism would be reserved only for the Elect, and Mani himself. The following section will aid my analyses of the possible message for the Manichaean reader to abandon the sect in Augustine's narration of his vision.

Since the light, the Living Soul, was ever-present in the material world, the Manichaeans understood it as being at constant risk of being damaged, and therefore the purification of light through every aspect of life was of profound concern. Baker-Brian (2011:122) describes how, by living a life of strict asceticism, the Elect of the Manichaean church endeavoured to distance themselves from any involvement with matters of darkness, and become worthy receptacles within which the liberation of light could occur. According to Eddy (2009:321), the Elect were required to keep to rigorous schedules of prayer and fasting. Marriage and sexual activities were prohibited, and they were also expected to relinquish all family ties and material possessions.

What was also specific about the obligations of the Elect was their strict dietary codes. The ritual meal existed to purify the light and it was therefore of extreme importance that it be done correctly, with no damage to light. Tardieu (1997:89) explains that they were vegetarian and prohibited from any form of 'killing', which included the harvesting and preparing of the produce that they ate, as this was supposed to prepare them for their principal soteriological task, namely digestion. Tardieu describes how the food that the Elect ate and digested, like all things, was thought to be composed of a mixture of light and darkness; and their meals consisted predominantly of fruit, which were thought to contain a large number of light particles. Their food was broken down through chewing and in the stomach, and through these metabolic processes, the light elements were believed to be separated and liberated from the dark elements.[23] Eddy (2009:321) describes how the concept of "salvation via metabolism"

[23] One can perhaps take into consideration the lifestyle and dietary codes of the Elchasaites here as a possible source of inspiration. Tardieu (1997:6) explains that followers of the Elchasaitic movement committed themselves to a way of life grounded in abstinence, continence and the abomination of matter. They largely rejected Jewish rituals, forms of worship, and the social basis of Judaism, and adhered to strict dietary codes. Alcohol and meat

was not simply a metaphor for a spiritual phenomenon, but this physical digestive salvation process was the biological counterpart to the cosmic process by which the three-wheeled machine purified light. As Tardieu (1997:89) states "The microcosm repeats the macrocosm."

The 'Hearers' or 'Auditors', the rank which the historical Augustine was a part of, were not required to adhere to the same standards as the Elect; they were allowed to marry (although procreation was discouraged) and were permitted more lenient prayer and dietary regimes (Eddy 2009:321). According to Asmussen (1981:136), the most crucial role of the Hearer was to participate in the 'killing' or harvesting of food for the Elect, and through their 'soul service' or daily offering, the Hearers enabled light to be more effectively liberated. This service was a condition of their own salvation, as it was thought that if a Hearer were faithful in his role, he could expect to be reincarnated in the ranks of the Elect and in this way become eligible for salvation. Kósa (2015:259) mentions that the natural processes in the world demonstrated to followers of Manichaeism the effect of the activities of the Elect and, consoled by this visible salvific mechanism, they might retain confidence in the effect of their service to the Elect.

Fuhrer (2013a:535) mentions that redemption of light particles could be achieved through this ascetic way of life, where the Elect of the Manichaean church could heal the "sick" particles of light that are present in the body, through prayer, singing psalms, fasting, giving alms, and through their dietary rituals. BeDuhn (1992:109) highlights that salvation for the Manichaean began with a realignment of physiological processes, which were often described in the language of medicine. BeDuhn mentions the literal rather than figurative character of Manichaean ascetical language, whereby ascetic practise in Manichaeism involved controlling and manipulating the body for salutary ends, grounded in direct and literal apprehension of human physiology.

The Elect were thought to possess true wisdom, and others were professed to be able to achieve this through observance and study of the wisdom of Manichaeism. According to Brown (2000:46), it was preached that a man's pursuit of spiritual enlightenment depended upon his acceptance of Mani's teachings as truth, and that true purity could only be achieved through *gnosis*, not obtained by external observances, but by revelation from the Light-*Nous*. However, Asmussen (1981:25) clarifies that the achievement of wisdom was not considered synonymous

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were prohibited, and food was furthermore divided into two categories: Bread and vegetables made by locals was considered essentially 'male' and therefore allowed, while bread and vegetables from outside the community were considered 'female' and therefore forbidden.

with salvation, unlike in other gnostic religions, but it was the precondition and beginning of salvation. A man who had achieved *gnosis* could attain eternal life, as long as he lived in accordance with the knowledge he had gained and did not sin against the light soul within himself. For sin was taken very seriously in Manichaeism, and forgiveness was granted to Hearers only once in their lifetime by the Manichaean church.

According to BeDuhn (2010:179), the historical Augustine had been attracted to Manichaeism as it seemed to be orientated toward the philosophical practise of rising above the body, senses, and passions toward the purity and truth of the divine.[24] For the Manichaeans, on its own, the soul was considered to be free in the truest sense of word, and the inherently good soul could make only good choices when acting in its own character. However, because it was hemmed in by the constraints of the material body, struggling to achieve its liberation, bad choices could occur when the mind became confused from contact with matter. BeDuhn (2010:175) explains that it was the Light-*Nous* which supposedly aided the soul in its liberation from entanglement with matter and its ascent to its divine origin, by enlightening the individual human mind. While to classical man wisdom was the fruit of prolonged and arduous intellectual discipline and personal development, Brown (2000:49) mentions that to the Manichaeans, *gnosis* entailed an esoteric and exotic secret revelation that claimed to bypass the demands of a classical philosopher's quest for truth. The Manichaeans did not seem to believe in philosophical inquiry and the ascent of the soul through meditation or visions. For the Manichaean Hearers, living a pure sinless life and adhering to doctrine ensured salvation of the soul after death.

Baker-Brian (2011:111) notes that the struggle between light and darkness and the light's eventual recovery lies at the heart of the myth, and he determines this to be the very essence of Manichaean anthropology and soteriology, in that these primal elements of light were understood by Manichaeans to be "the stuff of souls," a "genealogical statement of fact." Each human soul derived from, and in its very essence was, the Living Soul. Scibona (2001:452) also mentions how the struggle between light and darkness defined Manichaean anthropology and describes how Mani himself emphasizes the anthropological- but already cosmogonically defined- opposition of the two substances which was entrusted to human responsibility until

[24] Augustine later found a similar emphasis in the rhetoric of Ambrose and Platonic literature. According to BeDuhn (2010:171), the transition between Manichaeism to the philosophy of the Neoplatonists would have been easy and he highlights the similarities between the two doctrines.

the end. This opposition is evident in the impurity of the body compared to the soul, an impurity strictly related to the distinction between life and death, light and darkness.

In conclusion, this discussion has indicated that Mani's revelation was based on an exceedingly materialistic view of the entire universe, including God, the realm of light and darkness, and souls; and on the continuous and pervasive battle between light and darkness, good and evil. As a consequence, every aspect of Manichaean doctrine centred around the notion of universal suffering whereby all souls share a common divine origin, but have become imprisoned in a hostile material world. Thus, while light may possess spiritual qualities, it nevertheless endures a material existence of suffering and corruption. The divine nature as light could be perceived by the every-day Manichaean through the five senses: seeing, smelling and tasting light as physical elements in the natural universe, witnessing the cosmic functions of the sun and moon, or partaking in the body-centric salutary rituals of the Elect. The Elect themselves could perceive the light psychologically through revelation by the Light-*Nous.* Augustine, in book 7, uses the fundamental Manichaean conception of God as light substance, which could be perceived by bodily vision, to elaborate on his own understanding of God's nature. However, I put forward the idea in Chapter 3 that he transforms light and vision into figurative images which become the basis for the outlaying of his doctrine of illumination, his experience and cognition of God. I posit that he does this in order to transform the way his Manichaean readers think and thus persuade them towards conversion.

Chapter 3: Light and Darkness in Book 7 of the *Confessions*

3.1. Introduction

As seen in the previous chapter, the Manichaean doctrine was highly materialistic, and followers of the religion were taught that the world and all its processes were in place as an actual physical mechanism for the salvation of particles of light from their imprisonment in matter. The separation of light from dark was a man's primary purpose on earth, and he pursued knowledge and a good moral life in the hopes of achieving it. Following the disappointing interaction with the Manichaean, Faustus, Augustine demonstrates in his *Confessions* how he became disillusioned with Manichaeism and began to question the core precepts of the religion, turning briefly to the scepticism of Cicero and the Academics.[25] Book 7 of his *Confessions* describes the transitional period in his life when he had moved away from Manichaeism, but he was not yet ready to commit to another religious group until he had come to some intellectual, philosophical and theological certainties. Brown (2000:70) argues that the historical Augustine never, however, wholly adopted the Academic's view that the human mind was incapable of ever reaching the truth, and rather leaned toward the idea that people might use some 'authority' to point them towards the truth, which in Augustine's case would become the Catholic Church and scripture. Given Augustine's experiences with belief, O'Connell (1996:94) reasons that it was "psychologically indispensable" for him to arrive at some certainties before he could reopen himself to faithfully believing.

In Milan, Augustine decided to enrol himself as a catechumen in the Catholic Church, a position which allowed him to remain relatively uncommitted to the faith.[26] BeDuhn (2010:170) believes that this decision was more likely a political gesture of conformity, as the court in Milan was Christian and governed by the bishop Ambrose. Whatever his reasons, it seems that the historical Augustine was extremely open to being taught at this point, and it was significant that he became acquainted with Ambrose in this state, particularly Ambrose's

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[25] Augustine *Confessions* 5.10.19: *Etenim suborta est etiam mihi cogitatio, prudentiores illos ceteris fuisse philosophos, quos Academicos appellant, quod de omnibus dubitandum esse censuerant, nec aliquid veri ab homine comprehendi posse decreverant* ("In fact, though, a suspicion had arisen in my mind that another class of philosophers, known as the Academics, were more likely to be right. These men had recommended universal doubt, announcing that no part of the truth could be understood by the human mind").

[26] Augustine describes this in the *Confessions* (5.14.25): *quibus tamen philosophis, quod sine salutari nomine Christi essent, curationem languoris animae meae conmittere omnino recusabam. statui ergo tamdiu esse catechumenus in catholica ecclesia mihi a parentibus conmendata, donec aliquid certi eluceret, quo cursum dirigerem* ("I flatly refused to entrust the cure of my soul's sickness to philosophers who were strangers to the saving name of Christ. I resolved therefore to live as a catechumen in the Catholic Church, which was what my parents had wished for me, until some kind of certainty dawned by which I might direct my steps aright").

sermons. BeDuhn (2010:165) considers that Ambrose came to be the 'spiritual father' of Augustine and that his sermons exposed Augustine to ideas and practises such as trinitarianism, the allegorical interpretation of biblical texts, and the way in which tenets of Neoplatonism could quite naturally converge upon Christianity.[27] O'Connell (1996:93) too argues that it was Ambrose's sermons which cleared up a number of the difficulties and questions which Augustine had about Catholic teaching, difficulties which the more belligerent Manichaeans loved to bring up against Catholics. According to BeDuhn (2010:168), Ambrose was furthermore well aware of the Manichaeans and the challenge they posed to the emerging Nicene orthodoxy, and used his sermons and writings to attack Manichaean positions. Through his exposure to Ambrose's rhetoric, Augustine would have been alerted to what was objectionable about Manichaeism. For example, Ambrose criticised the God of the Manichaeans as being insufficiently transcendent, faulted their rejection of Christ's incarnation, and chided their view that humans had been created by the forces of evil. Augustine also gradually began to realize that the Manichaeans had falsely portrayed the teaching of the Catholics, at least as Ambrose presented it.

I am in agreement with O'Connell's (1996:104) contention that book 7 of the *Confessions* marks one of the most important steps in Augustine's conversion narrative, in which he deals systematically with how he grappled with mythical conceptions about God based on the physical universe, and graduated toward the incorporeal abstractions regarded by the Platonists. As I argue in the sections to follow, the primary theme throughout book 7 is the dichotomy between a material and spiritual understanding of God, in which the spiritual way of thinking is clearly advocated. Fuhrer (2013a:537) argues convincingly that, according to the narrative in the *Confessions*, Augustine's step towards conversion was prompted by, among other things, his critical evaluation of Manichaean theology and cosmology, centred around their materialist conception of the nature of God. It is clear to me that in book 7, a critique of Manichaeism becomes the starting point from which Augustine narrates his search to a new conception of God and the formulation of a doctrine which corresponds to this view of God.

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[27] Brown (2000:84) describes how the more fashionable version of Neo-Platonism in Milan at that time was Christian and that this significant modification had begun in Rome with the eminent African professor of rhetoric, Marius Victorinus, who had suddenly decided to become a Christian. Victorinus translated the works of Plotinus and other Neo-Platonic writings into Latin, making the books available by translation to men such as Augustine who were not as well-versed in Greek. Victorinus was well-acquainted with a Milanese priest, Simplicianus and, according to Brown's interpretation, it was Simplicianus who seems to have directed the theological studies of Ambrose, exposing him to a combined Christian and Neo-Platonic movement.

According to Kotzé (2004:57), one of the more prominent features of protreptic literature is an exhortation to a particular way of life. This is achieved by exposing the errors of alternative ways of thinking and demonstrating the truth behind a particular philosophical position. Accordingly, in this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that Augustine reveals the inconsistencies of the Manichaean materialist way of thinking, while simultaneously bringing his readers, step by step, to an understanding about a spiritual, and Neoplatonic-Christian, way of thinking, in order to urge his readers towards conversion. Augustine details the significance of coming to a spiritual understanding to his own personal conversion and thus becomes an example to his readers. In this way, the *Confessions* can be considered to contain protreptic elements, aimed at exhorting its readers to the Catholic way of life (see section 1.1 on elements of protreptic literature). Augustine is careful to emphasize that his narrated self was seeking only truth and was sceptical of blindly believing in any doctrine. This avowal aids his portrayal of the insights he comes to as being based on purely rational and intellectual arguments, thus being the favourable and sensible position by which to abide.

It appears that the dichotomy between the material and spiritual is established in book 7 through images of light and darkness, and the associated images of sight and blindness, where Augustine describes his materialism as a condition of blindness and darkness, and his journey to the truth as being one of sight and illumination. The images are used in a way that is reminiscent of Manichaean concepts and images, in their belief in God as light and their doctrine of salvation based on the liberation of light from darkness, which leads to my contention that the Manichaeans formed the intended audience of the exhortation to a spiritual way of thinking.

Fuhrer's analysis of *De ordine* forms an important point of departure in my argument. She describes how the goal for both the Manichaean and the "Platonic-Nicene-Christian" was similar: the acquisition of knowledge or *gnosis*, which is depicted as the appearance of 'light' or 'illumination' or, according to the Manichaean mythological system, equated with the purging of light elements of the realm of darkness (2013b:68). The images of light and darkness, sight and blindness thus had special importance to the Manichaeans, as the author Augustine would have known from his time as a Manichaean. Fuhrer (2013b:64) argues that Augustine expected a Manichaean readership, and therefore coded his text using Manichaean language, but he created new meaning for them. The points Fuhrer raises are valid for book 7 of the *Confessions* too. In book 7, Augustine interprets the Manichaean images of light and darkness as a reference to an ontological system, a reality that is purely intelligible rather than

sensible in the physical world. The function of this could be viewed as contributing to an anti-Manichaean polemic; however, by so clearly relating himself to his former co-religionists and urging them to share in his spiritual journey using emotional language, this could also be viewed as a tenderer form of persuasion and a technique of protreptic literature.

A general outline of my arguments may be as follows: First I analyse the opening sections of book 7 (7.1.1-7.1.2) which deal with the narrated Augustine's struggle with abandoning a materialistic conception of the nature of God. Augustine describes his young self in a condition of blindness and darkness, where the truth about God is obscured by clouds of phantasms, which I argue signify his materialist, and Manichaean, view of reality. I then advance to chapters 7.7.11-7.8.12 where Augustine continues to describe his past materialist view of reality as a stumbling block which rendered him blind to the truth about God, his eyes puffy and swollen. He introduces the image of God as healer and the promise that God would relieve his blindness, thus allowing him an unobstructed view of God's light.

In the next section of the thesis, I return to the passages following 7.1.1-7.1.2 where Augustine initiates extended and in-depth discussions and inserts into his reader's minds the difficult theological questions which he tackled at that time. He discusses the issue of *unde malum*, but no solution to the problem is achieved (*Confessions* 7.2.3-7.5.7). After this Augustine turns to a presentation of what he read in the books of the Platonists (7.9.13-7.9.15). I argue that he presents such a reading, not only to demonstrate how they had helped him to move away from a materialist way of thinking, but also to use as an opportunity to refute the core tenets of Manichaeism, and in the language of God as light.

Augustine subsequently expresses how his then new-found spiritual understanding of God helped him to achieve some insight to the problems that he had struggled with when confined to a materialist way of thinking. This takes up most of the latter half of book 7. From using images of blindness and darkness, he turns to images of vision and seeing the light to describe how he came to understand the truth about God (7.10.16). Augustine then returns to the question of the origin of evil and describes how he managed to find a solution, where the Manichaean conception is clearly rejected (7.11.17-7.16.22). While there are not many instances of light and darkness or sight and blindness imagery in this particular discussion of *unde malum*, it is important that Augustine refutes the Manichaean conception explicitly, making me certain that the Manichaeans form a part of the intended audience. Augustine finally offers personal proof that his new-found spiritual conception of God is indeed the truth, by describing his vision of God (7.17.23).

Book 7 ends with an exposition on the importance of Christ as mediator between God and man, and Augustine's very final reflection that intellectual understanding was not enough. He expresses the need for his young self's moral conversion and the subjugation of his will so that he might love and contemplate God. I demonstrate how Augustine noticeably moves from images of blindness and darkness when discussing materialist view of reality, to images of sight and seeing the light when he manages to understand God spiritually. The images therefore become symbols of his intellectual ascent and are highly effective in describing his journey to God, a journey which seems to be directed as an example for the readers of the *Confessions*, and specifically the Manichaean readers, to imitate.

3.2. The Light Obscured

In accordance with Van Oort's (2013b:156) views that Augustine follows classical practice in the *Confessions* by indicating the theme of a book at its beginning, I examine here the opening lines of book 7 for an indication of what this might be:

> *Iam mortua erat adulescentia mea mala et nefanda, et ibam in iuventutem, quanto aetate maior, tanto vanitate turpior, qui cogitare aliquid substantiae nisi tale non poteram, quale per hos oculos videri solet. non te cogitabam, deus, in figura corporis humani: ex quo audire aliquid de sapientia coepi, semper hoc fugi, et gaudebam me hoc reperire in fide spiritalis matris nostrae, Catholicae tuae; sed quid te aliud cogitarem non occurrebat. et conabar cogitare te homo, et talis homo, summum et solum et verum deum*
>
> By now my misspent, impious adolescence was dead, and I was entering the period of youth, but as I advanced in age I sank ignobly into foolishness, for I was unable to grasp the idea of substance except as something we can see with our bodily eyes. I was no longer representing you to myself in the shape of a human body, O God, for since beginning to acquire some inkling of philosophy I always shunned this illusion, and now I was rejoicing to find a different view in the belief of our spiritual mother, your Catholic Church. Yet no alternative way of thinking about you had occurred to me; and here I was, a mere human, and a sinful one at that, striving to comprehend you, the supreme, sole, true God (7.1.1).

At first glance, Augustine's expression of frustration at not having been able to conceive God except as a material substance sets up the process of self-analysis and transformation which follows in book 7, culminating in the depiction of his young self's certainty in *fide spiritalis*

matris… Catholicae. A closer look at the opening passage, however, provides some clues as to the possible Manichaean audience to be addressed in book 7. One of the first clues is that Augustine speaks about his desire for knowledge of the true God (*verum deum*) in the opening paragraph of the book. As mentioned in section 2.2, Manichaeism claimed to supply its followers with saving knowledge, often specified in Manichaeans texts as "the knowledge of truth." Augustine, in all likelihood in opposition to the Manichaean claim of truth, confesses here the very untruthfulness of his past Manichaean way of thinking (*adulescentia mea mala et nefanda*) and his desperate search for the actual truth. Key words in the opening passages of the book are truth (*verum*) and knowledge (*cogitabam*, *sapientia*, *cogitarem*, *cogitare*) which remind one of *Confessions* 3.6.10 where he describes falling in with the Manichaeans.[28] It is quite likely that Augustine uses these words with purpose in the opening lines of the book and they become pointers to direct the reader's mind toward the possible *intentio operis*.

Furthermore, in the opening paragraph Augustine introduces imagery of the eyes, sight and blindness which become recurring images in the rest of the book. Firstly, he says:

> *cogitare aliquid substantiae nisi tale non poteram quale per hos oculos videri solet*
>
> I was unable to grasp the idea of substance except as something we can see with our bodily eyes (7.1.1).

Augustine uses the image of the bodily eyes here to illustrate his past preoccupation with the material, and he couples this with the phrase *tanto vanitate turpior*. Although the young Augustine's Manichaean conception of God as a physical 'realm of light' had evaporated, he could not move beyond a materialist notion of God. Associating a materialistic way of thinking with the description of becoming more and more defiled (*turpior*) is an effective rhetorical tactic which contains a subliminal warning to the readers. The implication is that these false ideas about God lead to a descent further and further from the truth. Moreover, the association of the word *vanitate* to this way of thinking emphasizes that the comfortable and seemingly solid notion of a God that can be seen in the world actually holds no truth, it is an empty and futile belief. It can be argued that the word *vanitate* denotes showing undue pride in one's beliefs, beliefs which hold no value and which will not bring fulfilment. It can also describe

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[28] Augustine *Confessions* 3.6.10: *ceterum cor inane veri. et dicebant: veritas et veritas, et multum eam dicebant mihi, et nusquam erat in eis, sed falsa loquebantur non de te tantum, qui vere veritas es, sed etiam de istis elementis mundi, creatura tua…* ("their hearts were empty of the truth. They would say, "Truth, truth!" and had plenty to tell me on the subject, but truth had no place in them. They told me lies not only about you, who are truly the Truth, but also about the elements of this world that is your creation").

beliefs that are irreverent or blasphemous. This is an evocative way for Augustine to describe his former belief system which notoriously promised its adherers truth and wisdom.

Augustine continues in 7.1.1 to describe how he had an instinctual feeling that God must be inviolable, imperishable, and unchangeable, because he was sure that such qualities were superior to anything subject to violation and change. According to Vaught (2004:26), knowledge of this kind presupposes the work of a divine teacher, whose existence the young Augustine has not yet acknowledged, but an understanding of whom will develop when he constructs the philosophical and theological framework that made his conversion possible. I concur with Vaught (2004:27) that at this point Augustine does not elaborate on the theological intricacies of these fundamental qualities, but turns instead in an existential direction. Augustine's emotion in this passage is certainly palpable, and it not only exhibits to us readers a sense of his past desperation for truth, but almost ignites a mutual feeling. Augustine describes his fundamental idea about God as a weapon which he used to try to remove the materialistic notions of God which filled his imagination, notions which he goes on to describe as clouds of filth blocking the vision of his mind:

> *clamabat violenter cor meum adversus omnia phantasmata mea, et hoc uno ictu conabar abigere circumvolantem turbam inmunditiae ab acie mentis meae: et vix dimota in ictu oculi, ecce conglobata rursus aderat, et inruebat in aspectum meum et obnubilabat eum.*
>
> "My heart cried out in vehement protest against all the phantom shapes that thronged my imagination, and I strove with this single weapon to beat away from the gaze of my mind the cloud of filth that hovered round me, but hardly had I got rid of it than in another twinkling of an eye it was back again, clotted together, invading and clogging my vision" (7.1.1).

Augustine continues here with the analogy of seeing, through which he establishes the idea that to understand is to the mind what to see is for the senses, and that it is with the "gaze of [his] mind" that he is attempting to conceive God. Teske (2009:79) examines Augustine's use of the concept of 'eye of the mind' and argues that Augustine sets it up in stark contrast to the kind of seeing of the bodily eyes, where the bodily eyes are capable of seeing the material realm of the senses and the physical world, but it is only with the eyes of the mind that one might hope to see the intelligible realm where conceptual realties can be grasped. I find it significant that Augustine is careful not to use the word *oculos* or *oculi* to describe his mental vision, but

chooses instead the words *acie* and *aspectum*, further enhancing the difference between the two kinds of sight and the dichotomy between seeing the material world and the conceptual world where an understanding of God might be found.

Augustine's use of the image of eyes and sight may have held special significance for a Manichaean reader since, along with the other senses, sight was an important way for Manichaeans to perceive their God in the world (see section 2.3.3). However, Augustine emphasizes in this passage that the bodily eyes were *not* the way to perceive of God. For Augustine, the bodily eyes play a decidedly negative role in his narration of his quest to God and he describes them in book 10 as the medium between the physical world and the mind, and the primary medium by which one commits sin.[29] O'Connell (1996:15) argues that the recurring presence of the act of seeing and the bodily eyes in sections of the *Confessions* is used by Augustine to demonstrate his sinful condition, his impious curiosity, and "love of the world". I have found that Augustine tends to couple descriptions of his bodily eyes and their preoccupation with the outside world with images of blindness or darkness, to signify his pride and lack of perceiving the errors in his way of thinking, as we shall see further in book 7.[30]

Not only did the young Augustine struggle to move beyond what his eyes could see in the sensible world, but Augustine describes in this passage how, when he attempted to use the gaze of his mind to grasp God as spiritual reality, *phantasmata* and a *turbam inmunditiae* would block his comprehension. The word *phantasmata* has been used by Augustine already in 3.6.10 to describe the false beliefs of the Manichaeans, so it can be reasoned that he is referring to Manichaean materialist notions here which are hampering his vision.[31] Djuth (2007:82)

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[29] Augustine *Confessions* 10.35.54: *..oculi autem sunt ad noscendum in sensibus principes, concupiscentia oculorum eloquio divino adpellata est… oculorum vocatur, quia videndi officium, in quo primatum oculi tenent, etiam ceteri sensus sibi de similitudine usurpant, cum aliquid cognitionis explorant* ("..since the eyes are paramount among the senses in acquiring information, this inquisitive tendency is called in holy scripture concupiscence of the eyes…General sense-experience is called lust of the eyes, because when the other senses explore an object in an effort to collect knowledge, they claim for themselves, by a certain analogy, the office of seeing, in which the eyes unquestionably hold the primacy").

[30] Augustine also describes how his prideful condition kept him away from God in *Confessions* 3.3.5: *praefidenti collo ad longe recedendum a te, amans vias meas et non tuas, amans fugitivam libertatem* ("I withdrew further and further from you, loving my own ways and not yours, relishing the freedom of a runaway slave").

[31] Augustine *Confessions* 3.6.10: *At ego nec priora illa, sed te ipsam, veritas, in qua non est conmutatio nec momenti obumbratio, esuriebam et sitiebam. et apponebantur adhuc mihi in illis ferculis phantasmata splendida, quibus iam melius erat amare istum solem, saltem istis oculis verum, quam illa falsa animo decepto per oculos… quia illa erant corporalia phantasmata, falsa corpora* ("But I was hungering and thirsting for you, not your creations, not even for your spiritual creations, but for yourself, O Truth, in whom there is no variation, no play of changing shadow; and all they set before me were dishes of glittering myths. It would have been more profitable to love the sun in the sky, which at least our eyes perceive truly, than those chimeras offered to a mind that had been led astray through its eyes…they were nothing but figments of the imagination invested with bodily form, counterfeit bodies").

explains that the word *phantasmata* is used in platonic philosophy to describe something that is conceived in the mind based on the material world of the senses, but is not in fact real. Rather, it is based on human conjecture. According to Djuth (2007:83), Augustine employs the term *phantasmata* in a decidedly negative manner in his writings, and most strikingly in his refutation of Manichaeism. She argues that, for Augustine, the Manichaeans are unable to differentiate the true nature of God and the soul from their imaginations and false conceptions, which are constructed from corporeal shapes that appear to the senses, but have no bearing on reality. They then attribute these images to divine entities as though they are real. Augustine believes that their error lies in mistaking opinion for truth, and not grounding their beliefs in empirical reality.

The use of cloud imagery is furthermore highly effective as a symbol of the obscuration and deception. Perhaps one of the earliest examples of the cloud metaphor in literature is in Aristophanes' play, *The Clouds*. According to Fisher (1988:24), the clouds play the chorus and playwright's voice, but also symbolize the trendy philosophical "fluff" that Aristophanes was disparaging. It seems that Augustine is using clouds as a similar symbol here, whereby he presents the idea that just as clouds can interfere with our bodily vision of sunlight, so too can certain ideas prevent comprehension of mental concepts or vision with the eyes of the mind. Since clouds are formless and transient in property (they are amorphous and easily dispersed) and in action they block light, the image of clouds to describe materialist ideas links well to the description *tanto vanitate* that Augustine used in the opening paragraph of the book; these materialist ideas are actually empty, formless nothings. This forms the poetic opposite of the grounding in spiritual insight that the young Augustine sought. The materialist notions which seemed so certain in Augustine's past are described as vacuous truths which can and must be swept away, while the less tangible realities which he sought have solid grounding in the truth. However, this kind of seeing requires a certain spiritual awareness which the young Augustine did not yet possess.

The image of the cloud which blocks the young Augustine's comprehension of God furthermore has echoes to the Manichaean belief that the Father of Greatness is covered by a veil and cannot be seen by the naked eye (see section 2.3.1), as well as echoes to the Manichaean association of the natural phenomena of clouds with the archons and their view of clouds as an example of the presence of evil in the world (see section 2.3.3). The description of these materialistic ideas as clouds of filth which are clotted together (*conglobata*) and which both invade (*inruebat*) and envelop in darkness or literally benight the young Augustine's

vision (*obnubilabat*) furthermore reminds the reader of the Manichaean powers of darkness, which attempted to invade the realm of light and caused the mingling of dark with light, as well as of the Manichaean *bolos*, a prison for the evil powers of darkness at the end of time (see section 2.3.2). These descriptors are couched in Manichaean terminology which makes me convinced that they are purposely used to attract the attention of the possible Manichaean reader.

Any Manichaean who was reading Augustine's description of his clouded judgement might have understood the image of clouds not only in the sense of obstruction or deception, but also more literally as connected to archons and the realm of darkness. The description of materialist notions as phantasms and as clouds would in this way have been interpreted by Manichaeans as their teachings being evil.[32]

It is further conceivable that the young intellectuals who had joined Manichaeism, and who may have been reading this passage, would have understood Augustine's past desire for the truth about God. Many of them would have been of similar stock to the young Augustine; men of inquiring minds, inquisitive and anxious to increase their powers of intellect and acquire some grounding in the truth. This would have also included the kind of Manichaean who had begun to find fault with the Manichaean system. By establishing a connection between the clouds or *phantasmata* which obscure the truth and inhibit his reason, and a Manichaean way of thinking, Augustine's description is based on his own conceptions prior to his conversion. The narrator is admonishing his past self. From the vantage point of a now-acknowledged total dependence on the word of God, his youthful errors are dismissed as the blind ignorance of a man not yet illuminated by the proper understanding of God's truth. The images of obscured vision in the *Confessions* become meaningful in Augustine's personal existential anxieties, but in this way, he also instils anxiety in readers who might currently be followers of Manichaeism.

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[32] Augustine has already connected the Manichaean teachings with clouds in book 4 of his *Confessions*. In 4.14.23, Augustine describes the feebleness of a soul not yet grounded in the truth, saying that it is tossed about and easily influenced by the opinions of others. The image of God as light and as Truth is used, and this light is obscured by what Augustine calls clouds of illusory truths, with the result that the soul cannot see the real truth:
ecce ubi iacet anima infirma, nondum haerens soliditati veritatis. sicut aurae linguarum flaverint a pectoribus opinantium, ita fertur et vertitur, torquetur ac retorquetur, et obnubilatur ei lumen et non cernitur veritas
"To such weakness is a soul reduced when it is not yet anchored in the solid ground of truth. It is tossed and turned, whirled and spun, by every breath of opinion from the mouths of those who think they know, its light is obscured by clouds and it cannot see the truth" (4.14.23).
Both Augustine's pride and his adherence to deceptive opinions and teachings concealed the 'light' of God from him, causing him to be unable to 'see' the truth and thus remain blind. It is significant that Augustine, in the above passage and in book 7, associates this image of clouds obscuring the light with the Manichaeans who were taught that their doctrine would bring them back to the realm of light and wisdom.

He admonishes the current Manichaean readers about the dangers of *phantasmata*, illustrating how they left him empty and desperate for the truth about God. According to O'Connell (1996:7), Augustine tries to show the Manichaeans in his *Confessions* that their teachings cannot be relied upon, and the course to wisdom and return to the 'light' is actually impeded by the doctrine, blocking the comprehension of reality. To me it is unambiguous that by focusing singularly on the problems of Manichaean thinking, the narrator addresses those who may, like he himself at the stage of life recounted in this book, still be trapped within the sphere of Manichaeism.

Augustine goes on in 7.1.2 to describe how he believed at that time that God was a substance stretched out in space, as the Manichaeans did, and whatever was not a substance he deemed nothing at all. Vaught (2004:28) argues that Augustine associates himself with a Manichaean audience by sharing some of the anxieties he had when he was trying to extricate himself from the sect. In 7.1.2, Augustine says that he was reluctant to abandon thinking about God as a material substance; for as the Manichaeans understand so clearly, materiality gives solidity to substance and appears to provide a stable foundation for a theological system. Moreover, the threat of nonbeing not only implicates God, but the soul too. As Rist (1994:33) has argued, God and the soul are closely linked in Augustine's thinking, and this is evident in his narration of his anxieties as a young man: just as he had conceived of God as a substance extended in space, so he conceived of himself as a material substance, body and soul. The young Augustine was anxious about abandoning such a way of thinking as he would then be forced to conceive of himself as absolutely nothing.

Augustine ends the passage of 7.1.2 by proclaiming that at this time God "had not yet illumined [his] darkness" (*sed nondum inluminaveras tenebras meas*). According to Lemmelijn (2012:568), in many religious systems, darkness is a symbol for both ignorance and death, for it is the condition of being unlike God, who is usually associated with life and light. Darkness has similar connotations in Manichaeism. As seen in the previous chapter, for the Manichaean, darkness was everything evil and, as matter, it was the evil part of themselves, their basest nature. By describing himself as in darkness while following the materialist and Manichaean way of thinking, Augustine is emphasizing once again the ineptitude of these teachings, and, accordingly, the importance of veering away from them.

Fuhrer (2013b:59) provides an in-depth analysis of the images and motifs in Augustine's *De ordine*, and her findings in many ways inform my reading of this section of the *Confessions*. She proposes that, while Augustine's images of darkness, blindness, and sickness in the

dialogue signify Augustine's spiritual or moral failings, these images nevertheless appear to refer to something at a higher level, in that God or the love of Jesus is always present in Augustine's description of his failings. In *Confessions* 7.1.2 too, God is depicted as being the one who was able to deliver the young Augustine from darkness. When Augustine says that God "had not yet illumined [his] darkness", God is set as the light source Who is able to illumine the darkness of the human condition, and there is a promise with the word *nondum* that this illumination would eventually come for the young Augustine. There are echoes in this singular proclamation to the promise in Manichaeism that the condition of suffering in the confines of darkness can be alleviated by the Light-*Nous* and the teachings of Mani, the self-proclaimed physician (see section 2.3.5). As is the case in Manichaean theology, in Augustine's text, light and darkness constantly interact with one another, and the presence of blindness and darkness comes with the promise of sight and light.

3.3. Darkness, Blindness, and God as Healer

I turn now to a passage further on in book 7 where Augustine continues to illustrate his disordered use of sight and obscured vision, as he hankered for a clear vision of God. He describes in 7.7.11 how he believed he would be able to find salvation by serving God, dedicating attention to scripture and practising continence, but because of his pride he was unable to fully adhere to this.[33] Augustine then describes his pride as a swelling which was so large that his eyes were sealed closed. This prevented him from the kind of seeing, the genuine understanding, which would allow him to abide in God, the Truth:

> *sed cum superbe contra te surgerem et currerem adversus dominum in cervice crassa scuti mei, etiam ista infima supra me facta sunt et premebant, et nusquam erat laxamentum et respiramentum. ipsa occurrebant undique acervatim et conglobatim cernenti, cogitanti autem imagines corporum ipsae opponebantur redeunti… et haec de vulnere meo creverant, quia humiliasti tamquam vulneratum superbum, et tumore meo separabar abs te, et nimis inflata facies claudebat oculos meos*
>
> "…but because I was rearing up against you in my pride, charging head high against the Lord and crassly presuming on my own strength, even those inferior things gained

[33] Augustine *Confessions* 7.7.11: *.et hoc erat rectum temperamentum et media regio salutis meae, ut manerem ad imaginem tuam et tibi serviens dominarer corpori. sed cum superbe contra te surgerem…nusquam erat laxamentum et respiramentum* ("The happy mean, the central region where I would find salvation, was to preserve your image in me, serving you and subduing my body; but because I was rearing up against you in pride…nowhere could I find respite or relief").

> the upper hand and pressed me down, so that nowhere could I find respite or relief. When I looked outward they crowded upon me thick and fast; when I tried to think the images of these material things blocked my path of return…All this had sprung from my wounded condition, for you humbled this proud man with a wounding blow. My swollen pride got in the way and kept you from me, and my face was so puffy that my eyes were closed" (7.7.11)

The images of material things, like the *phantasmata* described earlier, again crowd around the young Augustine (*conglobatim*) and he was unable to tear away his gaze. His preoccupation with these things, gazing outward at the material world and proudly insisting that, in this world, God and the truth could be perceived, resulted in his eyes becoming puffy and closed. These eyes refer to the eyes of his mind, sealed shut and unable to comprehend God on account of his "wounded condition" and "swollen pride." In book 4, when describing his years as a Manichaean hearer, Augustine introduces the theme of blindness as the prideful allegiance to material knowledge. He explains how these turned him away from the possibility of God's enlightenment, which would give him true insight:

> *dorsum enim habebam ad lumen, et ad ea, quae inluminantur, faciem: unde ipsa facies mea, qua inluminata cernebam, non inluminabatur*
>
> "I had turned my back to the light and my face to the things it illuminated, and so no light played upon my own face, or on the eyes that perceived them" (4.16.30).

The absence of light playing upon the young Augustine's face, and particularly his eyes, reveals that his intellect and preoccupation with what his eyes saw and read in the world were of no use in giving him true wisdom because they were turned away from God. It is implied here that God is the source of all light and the one who enlightens all things. He bestows intelligence and self-awareness to those who ground their intellect in Him. In his discussion of the young Augustine's desire for knowledge while a Manichaean, O'Connell (1996:32) argues that Augustine suggests that the acquisition of knowledge and honours promised by his secular studies and Manichaean teachings were only a sacrilegious illusion of the fulfilment that would come with humble abiding in God. Instead of illumining the young Augustine to the truth, these teachings rendered him blind to it.

In the passages leading up to the section of 7.7.11 quoted above, Augustine aptly portrays the anxiety with which his young self searched for the truth about God. For example, in 7.5.7 Augustine says that his soul was "weighed down…by the gnawing anxieties that flowed from

[his] fear that death might overtake [him] before [he] had found the truth" (*talia volvebam pectore misero, ingravidato curis mordacissimis de timore mortis et non inventa veritate*). Also, in the beginning of 7.7.11, he uses highly emotional language and describes his search as 'feverish' (*aestuans*) while maintaining that his belief in God as an unchangeable substance was a pillar, something solid and sane, from which he was able to conduct his enquiry (*sed me non sinebas ullis fluctibus cogitationis auferri ab ea fide, qua credebam et esse te, et esse inconmutabilem substantiam tuam*). Augustine likens his fervour to labour pains, which tear at his heart (*quae illa tormenta parturientis cordis mei, qui gemitus, deus meus*), and uses words like "mute suffering[s]" (*tacitae contritiones*), "my pain" or literally 'I suffered' (*patiebar*), and a "tumult that raged in my soul" (*tumultus animae meae*). Augustine seems to be employing expressions that he had encountered in the Manichaean books, which according to Fuhrer (2013b:61), are full of descriptions about the suffering Jesus, and the pain endured by the Living Soul, longing to return to the realm from whence it came (see section 2.3.3). Kotzé (2004:100) also asserts that the description of a man in need of healing is a common image in protreptic literature, as well as within Manichean thought. Augustine's use of visceral, emotive language, as well as the image of illness in 7.7.11. is therefore effective as a protreptic technique. Since these protreptic features are found in tandem with numerous Manichaean echoes, I contend that this section functions as exhortation to the potential Manichaean readers of the *Confessions* to abandon their materialist world view.

As Cook (1994:111) puts forth, another of the techniques which protreptics often utilise is the "argument from consequence," whereby certain actions or ways of thinking are portrayed as resulting in something either positive or negative, in order to exhort to dissuade the intended audience towards or from a particular philosophy. It appears to me that Augustine employs this "argument from consequence" to dissuade his audience from a materialist, and Manichaean, way of thinking, when he demonstrates that his preoccupation with *phantasmata* and material images resulted in his blindness and led him away from God. Augustine's emotional language and illustration of his suffering also arouses sympathy in his readers, and by directing his anxiety at Manichaeism, may have instilled fear of similar consequence in his Manichaean readers specifically.

The suffering that Augustine describes in 7.7.11 is not the kind that lasts eternally, however, and Augustine asserts straight away in 7.8.12 that God has never-ending pity on sinners (*tu vero domine, in aeternum manes, et non in aeternum irasceris nobis, quoniam miseratus es terram et cinerem*). This portrayal of a merciful and interventionist God is perhaps an implicit

denunciation of the Manichaean conception of God, who allows particles of himself to be trapped in darkness and suffer immensely in the process. Augustine continues to describe how God helped to subside the swelling of his eyes, which resulted in God growing clear to his "spiritual sight", the kind of sight which signifies a deeper, spiritual understanding:

> *et stimulis internis agitabas me, ut inpatiens essem, donec mihi per interiorem aspectum certus esses. et residebat tumor meus ex occulta manu medicinae tuae, aciesque conturbata et contenebrata mentis meae acri collyrio salubrium dolorum de die in diem sanabatur.*
>
> "You goaded me from within to make me chafe impatiently until you should grow clear to my spiritual sight. At the unseen touch of your medicine my swelling subsided, while under the stinging eye-salve of curative pain the fretful darkened vision of my spirit began to improve day by day" (7.8.12).

The narrated Augustine's state of ignorance is signified here as the incapacitation through illness, specifically blindness. Augustine raises the idea that in order for his sickness to be healed, he had to be prepared to undergo a painful cure (*acri collyrio*), and this medicine was administered by the unseen touch of the God whom Augustine addresses. Blackburn Griffith (2004) analyses patterns of medical imagery in Augustine's sermons where Christ is presented as the doctor or *medicus.*[34] According to Blackburn Griffith (2004:392), Augustine draws the imagery of a physician which heals the soul from classical portrayals of the role of the philosopher, in order to exhort his congregation to humility, and to follow the example of Christ's humility and his Word, which brings healing. It seems that Augustine is using the image in a similar way here, describing the medicine of God as healing his pride. Blackburn Griffith (2004:395) considers the image to encapsulate Augustine's soteriology, where the 'sin-sick' cannot heal themselves, but only Christ as *medicus* can.

According to Teske (2009:81), scholars generally agree that Augustine's theory of divine illumination does not mean that God produces concepts or knowledge in our minds. This is evident when Augustine says to his readers that the "darkened vision of [his] spirit began to

[34] In book 9.8.18 Augustine uses the image of medicine for Christ's protection of his people, in describing how Christ helped his mother, Monnica, to overcome her fondness for wine when she was young. Augustine says: "Would anything have been efficacious against that sly sickness, had your medicine not been watching over us, Lord? How did you cure her, how bring her back to health? Did you not elicit a hard, sharp reproof from another soul, and use it like a surgeon's knife…" (*numquid valebat aliquid adversus latentem morbum, nisi tua medicina, domine, vigilaret super nos?.. unde curasti? unde sanasti? nonne protulisti durum et acutum ex altera anima convicium, tamquam medicanale ferrum*).

improve day by day" (7.8.12) which demonstrates that it was not a sudden revelation or vision, or the achievement of *gnosis* which allowed him to reach an understanding about God. The subsequent chapters in book 7 further demonstrate how he had to spend a long and arduous time developing his understanding of God after he had discarded his Manichaean beliefs. Slowly but surely ("day by day") the young Augustine came to what he deemed the truth, basing it on his fundamental beliefs on the qualities of God, his reading of Neoplatonic philosophy, and his acceptance of the authority of scripture.

I agree with O'Connell (1996:95) who argues that in this passage (7.8.12), although unsatisfactorily explained by Augustine, the image of Christ's healing of Augustine's eyes, or his "spiritual sight", is furthermore used to illustrate the role of faith in Augustine's spiritual progress. It appears to me that Augustine is demonstrating with his image of an unseen healer that it was not his own intelligence or secular pursuits which allowed him to reach understanding about God, nor even revelation, but it was his growing faith in God which melted his pride. As his pride ebbed, this allowed first for Augustine's intellectual understanding of God, and later his love for God.

It is interesting to note the inclusion of God's touch being "unseen" by Augustine, an addition which brings in a subtle reminder that God is not present through what is perceivable in the material world from sensory reports. This contrasts starkly with the Manichaean notions of salvation through mechanisms which are clearly visible to the eye (see section 2.3.3). Torchia (1999:76) points out that the Manichaeans believed that enlightenment from Christ was an initial revelation by Jesus the Splendour and was reserved for the Apostles of Light, which included Mani. As mentioned in section 2.3, Baker-Brian (2011:104) indicates that the Manichaeans viewed Mani as a *medicus,* one who revealed profound truths and the mediator of literally life-saving knowledge thus far undisclosed. Subsequent revelations were considered to be provided through the teachings of the prophet Mani, but this enlightenment was further restricted to members of the Manichaean Elect. Augustine's portrayal of an active and merciful God is without the conditions that Mani put forward, where enlightenment was confined to a select group of people, and this may have appealed to a Manichaean hearer who had become dissuaded by the privileges of the Elect or hesitant to believe that Mani was who he claimed.

It must be also noted that the *Confessions* was not written as a list of past faults for which the narrator seeks forgiveness. Rather when he cites his past errors, he draws from it a spiritual lesson, which adheres to what O'Connell (1996:280) considers the underlying theme running through the *Confessions*, namely that a soul falls away into sin, but God is there "to deliver the

multitudes from darkness." Also, as Brown (2000:163) states, Augustine is not focused in his autobiographical narrative on relaying the precise sequence of events, but on how they changed his *affectus*. Thus, as opposed to launching a polemic against the Manichean way of thinking, Augustine instead invites his audience to be open-minded to the possible cure for their illness of perception. O'Connell (1996:164) asserts that "touch after touch, like a master-*pointilliste*" Augustine has filled his readers' subconscious with images of care throughout the *Confessions* (mothers or nurses with crying children, doctors and their suffering patients, mother-birds and their fledglings, fathers and their wayward sons). Augustine is providing a useful description using this imagery, of how an unbeliever can be brought to faith and certainty and he is implying that no matter how much one sins or errs in religious beliefs, God is omnipresent and forgiving. The images of darkness, blindness, and sickness tend to be depicted in the *Confessions* in tandem with their positive counterparts, where darkness is linked to striving for the light, sickness to medicine and health, and blindness to the promise of sight. The transformative implication of these complementary images can be viewed as an exhortative technique, where the imagery portrays the process and importance of conversion and thus incites action in the intended addressee.

3.4. A Riddle for his Readers: *Exercitatio Animi*

In the following section, I bring into focus the educational function of book 7, in which Augustine demonstrates his approach to certainty, how an unbeliever might come to the truth. O'Connell (1996:96) makes an important point that by setting up parallels between bodily eyes and the mind's eye in the opening passages of book 7, we fully expect Augustine to say that he wanted spiritual realities to be as manifest to his mind's eye as material realities are to the senses. This criterion for certainty seems quite natural, as people instinctively think of knowing something in terms of direct acquaintance. It is significant that in the *Confessions* Augustine uses a different approach to reach certainty. According to BeDuhn (2010:181) Augustine ascribes materialistic thinking to the reliance on sensory experience which he associates with Manichaean inductive approaches to knowledge and truth, now to be replaced with deductive methods and the outlaying of proofs. As Augustine states in *Confessions* 6.4.6, his young self wanted the spiritual realities which Ambrose spoke of to become as certain to him as he was

certain that "seven and three were ten", a mathematical certainty which Augustine assures the readers of the *Confessions* that he would never be mad enough to claim could not be known.[35]

O'Connell (1996:98) argues that in order to demonstrate to his readers the way to understand the faith of Christians, Augustine employs the educational technique of *exercitatio animi* throughout his *Confessions*. Stock (2010:23) mentions the presence of *exercitatio animi* in Augustine's writings, and identifies it as a philosophical exercise of the mind or soul, which has its roots in the Platonic tradition and was usually in the form of a master and disciples engaged in dialogue. Stock considers the term *exercitatio animi* to be too "intellectualist" to encompass the physical, emotional, and mental exercises that Augustine outlines in his writings, and he instead uses the term "spiritual exercises."

These definitions seem to me to correspond to the technique that Augustine employs throughout book 7 of the *Confessions*, where, he first, establishes the axiomatic properties of God that he held to be true in 7.1.1 (God must be imperishable, inviolable and unchangeable) and then conducts an exhaustive inquiry and outlines a theology based on these qualities. His inquiry is much like a thought experiment, and he initiates it by raising the question of God's nature and his struggle to conceive of God as a non-material reality (7.1.1-2), and then he progresses to the question of the origin of evil in the world and his search for an answer that would establish logical certainty in his fundamental belief that God must be imperishable, inviolable and unchangeable (7.2.3-7.5.7).

O'Connell (1996:99) argues convincingly that Augustine guides the minds of his readers over a series of intellectual hurdles, exercising and flexing their reasoning power through preliminary questions in preparation for the final effort of understanding which he has in store for them. According to O'Connell, Augustine knows that unless his readers are first genuinely troubled by the questions, and their minds actively engaged in endeavouring to resolve them, the answer will mean almost nothing to them. Williams (2001:61) asserts that Augustine's goal in his writings is never to inform his readers with quick definitions or answers to the difficult philosophical questions, rather the narrator asks his readers to look within, to think for

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[35] Augustine *Confessions* 6.4.6: *volebam enim eorum quae non viderem ita me certum fieri, ut certus essem, quod septem et tria decem sint. neque enim tam insanus eram, ut ne hoc quidem putarem posse conprehendi, sed sicut hoc, ita cetera cupiebam, sive corporalia, quae coram sensibus meis non adessent, sive spiritalia, de quibus cogitare nisi corporaliter nesciebam* ("I longed to become as certain of those things I could not see as I was that seven and three make ten. I was not so demented as to think that even this simple truth was beyond comprehension; but I wanted to have the same grasp of other things, both material entities not immediately present to my senses and spiritual realities of which I did not know how to think in any but a materialistic way").

themselves. The exercise can in this way be viewed as having an extortionary function, as it compels the audience of the text to reflection. Only once Augustine has discussed his reading of the Platonic books in 7.9.13-15, does he offer solutions to the questions he has raised, based on his then new-found knowledge from the Platonists and his contemplative vision of God.

I am in agreement with O'Connell (1996:100) who argues that the target audience of the *exercitatio animi* in book 7 of the *Confessions* would include conservative Catholics who might consider Augustine's efforts to understand the faith through pagan philosophy dangerous; non-Christian devotees to Neo-Platonist philosophy; the Donatists; and especially his former co-religionists the Manichaeans. I believe that book 7 in its entirety forms a part of this educational exercise, where all the questions that Augustine raises are related to questions which the Manichaeans would bring up against Catholics. Throughout book 7, Augustine attempts to show how it is the Manichaean system which should be rejected, and he corrects their misconceptions about the Catholic doctrine. O'Connell (1996:98) notes that in *Confessions* 5.14.25 we have already seen Augustine mention the need for an adequate notion of spiritual reality and the existence of God, a certainty which would settle any argument with the Manichaeans. Indeed, he says explicitly that he expended much effort in trying to discover if he could in any way convince the Manichaeans of their false teachings by some definite proofs.[36]

In addition, one of the features that can make a protreptic text effective is to seek identification with the intended audience, rather than to launch a polemic against them. Thus, protreptic writing may be regarded more a case of persuasion than of polemic and this requires the audience to be on the narrator's side. This is evident in Augustine's exposition in book 7, where the accusations he brings against the Manicheans is inverted against himself as a personal confession of sin. The narrator Augustine directs his meditation toward his past Manichaean ways of thinking, identifying himself with his possible Manichaean audience, and using Manichaean terminology. He further makes sure to set his narrative in a time when he was an apostate of the Manichaean church, but not wholly convinced with another way of thinking and open to the truth only. He thus appeals to Kotzé's (2013:108) definition of a 'liminal'

[36] Augustine *Confessions* 5.14.25: *tunc vero fortiter intendi animum, si quo modo possem certis aliquibus documentis Manichaeos convincere falsitatis. quod si possem spiritalem substantiam cogitare, statim machinamenta illa omnia solverentur et abicerentur ex animo meo* ("I then expended much mental effort on trying to discover if I could in any way convict the Manichees of falsehood by some definite proofs. If only I had been capable of envisioning a spiritual substance, all their elaborate constructions would have fallen to pieces at once and been thrown out of my mind…").

Manichaean who was in the same position as the young Augustine at that time. Augustine discusses theological issues which he had with Manichaeism, as well as points about Catholicism which the Manichaeans often attacked and it seems that Augustine is intensely concerned with the salvation of his former friends and co-religionists and supplying them with the truth.

As argued in the first section of this chapter, the opening passages of book 7 concerning God's nature seem to contain an exhortation to the potential Manichaean reader of the text to abandon their materialist way of thinking, and it is asserted that God must be thought of conceptually as a non-material reality. Before offering a solution about how a spiritual nature of God can be comprehended, Augustine continues onto the question of the origin of evil in 7.2.3-7.5.7. This was a kind of sub-problem and a possible avenue by which God's nature could be understood by developing a theodicy (the vindication of God in view of the existence of evil in the world and an answer to the question of why an omnipotent and good God permits evil, as defined by Platinga and Sennett [1998:25]). As Vaught (2004:29) points out in his discussion of book 7, Augustine begins his discussion of the problem of evil, not by focusing on it as an autonomous theoretical issue, but by placing it within the context of *creatio ex nihilo*, by remembering the nature of God, and by pointing to a practical implication of the question that he is about to consider.

The scope limitations of this thesis prevent me from engaging in an analysis of these passages, as well as the fact that images of light and darkness, or sight and blindness, do not occur here. However, the passage contends explicitly with the Manichaean conception of evil as attributed to the separate and material realm of darkness. Augustine exclaims that such a doctrine on evil should be rejected as it in no way reflected the truth and even terms it blasphemous.[37]

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[37] Augustine *Confessions* 7.2.3: *falsa esse illa omnia et exsecrabilia* ("this whole rigamarole would be shown up as untrue and to be rejected with loathing"). Augustine employs numerous features of the protreptic genre in this section, such as employing an emotive and urgent tone, as well as an exhortation to the Manichaeans to reject their belief system. Augustine describes in 7.3.4 how he conducted his search in the belief that the Manichaeans were not speaking the truth and that their understanding of evil as an independent principle that challenges the sovereignty of God was blasphemous (*securus eam quaerebam, et certus non esse verum quod illi dicerent, quos toto animo fugiebam; quia videbam quaerendo, unde malum, repletos malitia, qua opinarentur tuam potius substantiam male pati quam suam male facere*). As a possible solution, Augustine describes how he considered the issue of people's will. He declares that he knew that he had a will just as clearly as he knew that he was alive, and that when he wills or is unwilling to do something, it is he alone who is either willing or unwilling (7.3.5). Augustine describes how he began to understand that he is not a spectator observing the conflict between two competing principles within his soul, but a moral agent who is responsible for his own actions. He directs a critique at the Manichaeans saying he would never sink into such a pit of error as the people who would rather hold that God suffers evil than admit that humans commit evil out of their own will (*sed non usque ad illum infernum subducebar erroris, ubi nemo tibi confitetur, dum tu potius mala pati quam homo facere putatur*).

Augustine returns to the question of the origin of evil after he has described his reading of the books of the Platonists, and while the stance he takes was the fruit of his own personal reflections, it was prompted in great part by what he read in these *libri platonicorum*. Rist (1994:3) asserts that these books, in which Simplicianus later told Augustine that God and the Word were implied (*Confessions* 8.2.3), were mostly attributed to Plotinus himself and it is likely that the author Augustine's readings of these books were not limited to the period immediately before his conversion to Christianity. What he found in this period, however, was enough to convince him that Platonism and Christianity had much common ground. According to O'Connell (1996:119) these books functioned for Augustine as an admonition, spurring him to abandon the sensory focus that was crippling his efforts at understanding God, and to turn his mental gaze inward toward the immaterial objects which preoccupied the Platonists.

At the very centre of book 7 Augustine describes his reading of these books and in this way, Augustine's retelling of the content of these books functions as an admonition to the audience of the *Confessions* as well. Kotzé (2004:99) maintains that it is a key feature of the classical literature that the midpoint of a work engages with the crucial position of an exposition. Thus, the choice to locate the discussion of the *libri platonicorum* at the centre of the book demonstrates that Augustine wishes his audience to pay particular attention to this passage. The passage marks the point where the young Augustine came to a metaphysical understanding, having moved away from a materialistic way of thinking about God. This transformation is lucidly illustrated in the text through the use of imagery, where images of darkness and blindness recur through the first half of the book, and after the description of the contents of the books of the Platonists, images of sight and unobscured vision of the light shape the latter half of the book. In this way, Augustine illustrates how he became unhindered by the conceptions based on the physical world and was thus afforded a brief glance at God.

Rather than providing the words of the books themselves, Augustine gives a summary of their content though quotes from scripture, specifically the Gospel of John (1-16).[38] O'Donnell (1992:413) mentions that this allows for close comparison between the two doctrines, whereby Augustine manages to show how God must be thought of, in the way the Neoplatonists thought, as well as where Neoplatonism falls short. After reading the Platonist books, Augustine tells of his return to scripture (again), which this time managed to maintain its grip, allowing the

[38] Augustine *Confessions* 7.9.13: *et ibi legi non quidem his verbis, sed hoc idem omnino multis et multiplicibus suaderi rationibus* ("In them I read, not that the same words were used, but precisely the same doctrine was taught, buttressed by many and various arguments").

young Augustine to make use of both philosophy and scripture to model and formulate his beliefs further.

The passage in book 7 in which Augustine describes his reading of the *libri platonicorum* (7.9.13-15), offers not only a comparison between the Platonic and Christian doctrine, but also seems to entirely subvert Manichaean doctrine. I posit that the scriptural passage from which Augustine quotes overturns the Manichaean doctrine in every way and does so in language familiar to the Manichaeans, that of light and darkness. This passage at the centre of book 7 can be seen as a summary of the proofs he will outline in the latter half of book 7 that God is inviolable, imperishable, and unchangeable, and a summary of his answers to the questions he has inserted into the minds of his readers up to this point. He is showing his readers, using the authoritative words of scripture, the 'correct' way of thinking. Furthermore, along with his passionate language in the opening passages of book 7 where he attempts to invoke in the reader the same desire to search for God, Augustine's citation of the Neoplatonist books (through words of scripture) produces a paradigm for the reader that will be replicated in their reading of the *Confessions*. As Augustine used the *Hortensius* in Book 3 of *Confessions*, he reproduces these books' imitative purpose.[39]

3.4.1. Reading the Books of the Platonists

In this section, a theology is introduced which stands in systematic confutation of the Manichaean theology and is founded on the logical arguments of the Neoplatonists, essential to Augustine's new conceptual position. Immediately and clearly, the substantial differences between a Manichaean and Neoplatonic-Christian system are highlighted, along with their implications. Behind the rhetorical presentation lies the advancement of the concept of a monotheistic trinitarian God; a creator God Who is omnipotent; and the soul as separate from God.

The prologue of the Gospel of John, from which Augustine quotes, is a profound and poetic introduction to the identity of Christ, His pre-existence and the concept of the trinity. Augustine likely chose this passage to describe the content of the *libri platonicorum* as it is one of the few passages in the bible to identify Christ as the Word (*logos*, or *verbum* in the Latin), a term

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[39] Rist (1994:2) describes how Augustine was first drawn to philosophy by reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, an exhortation to philosophy modelled on the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle. In *Confessions* 3.4.7 he describes how, when he read the *Hortensius*, he felt an unbelievable intensity in his heart to fly away from earthly things to God and Wisdom (*Quomodo ardebam, deus meus, quomodo ardebam revolare a terrenis ad te…apud te est enim sapientia*).

which held significant meaning in ancient philosophy as wisdom, logic and reason. Duignan (2012) describes how, in the trinitarian interpretation, this prologue is a central text in the Catholic belief that Jesus is God, in connection with the idea that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit together are one God. With the opening lines of Augustine's narration of the contents of the Platonist books (*Confessions* 7.9.13), the existence of Christ "in the beginning" is established before His incarnation as Jesus in the world. Christ is also identified with the Word, the pre-existent divine hypostasis on the basis of Greek philosophical ideas (*in principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud deum et deus erat verbum: hoc erat in principio apud deum*).[40]

This first argument of the pre-existence of Christ and his identity as one with God is in direct opposition of the Manichaean belief that in the beginning there were two principals, one good, one evil. As Brown (2000:39) explains, it was the realm of darkness which co-existed with God and the realm of light in the beginning time. The Manichaeans had monotheistic elements, as discussed in section 2.3.2, however the principle of light, although unique in its substance, was constantly defined through its relationship with evil matter, it was light in darkness. This particular character of the Manichaean system, as well as the profoundly gnostic essence of the religion, have led scholars such as Scibona (2001:462) to conclude a theological monotheism and dualistic ontology of Manichaeism that is far removed from monotheism in the Judeo-Christian sense.

An idea of the pre-existence of Christ is given in Manichaean thought, where the emanation of light that closely resembles the Christian idea of Jesus as the Word is Jesus the Splendour. He is identified with the Light-*Nous,* which has similar connotations of wisdom and intellect to *logos.* The Manichaeans considered Jesus the Splendour a divine being and saw him as a holy emanation of the Father of Greatness, but they did not portray this Jesus as synonymous with God (see section 2.2.1). Thus, through the first line from which he quotes, Augustine introduces the concept of a trinitarian God, in implicit opposition to the dualistic tendency of the Manichaean system.

Next, God is presented as the sole agent of creation (*omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil*), underlining that the universe, mankind, and all other life, was created by God. This is in direct confrontation with the Manichaean creation myth, where it was the powers of

[40] Tornau (2019) describes how early Christian theologians and apologists often attempted to express the Christian faith in terms that would be intelligible to the Hellenistic world and to impress their hearers with the view that Christianity incorporated all that was best in pagan philosophy. Thus, in their apologies and polemical works, the early Christian Fathers would identify Christ with the pre-existent *logos*.

darkness who created mankind in the image of the Messenger (an emanation of the Father of Greatness), while other life (plants and animals) and the celestial bodies were created by emanations of the realm of light, from a mixture of matter (darkness) and particles of light. The Manichaean God was thus immanent and omnipresent in nature, but not the creator (see section 2.3.3).

Wildberg (2019) describes how, like the Manichaeans, the Neoplatonists were not creationists: their account of the origin of the universe did not recount creation at the very beginning of time, but rather argued for a process of emergence from the divine principle. They did not think that the universe could spring from a deity directly out of nothing, but considered reality to have emerged from the "One" in coherent stages, in such a way that one stage functions as the creative principle of the next. BeDuhn (2010:174) argues that the Manichaean emanationist cosmology was similar to the Neoplatonist notion of hypostases. Through the words of scripture, Augustine is offering here an alternative interpretation of God as sole creator and refuting both the Manichaean and Neoplatonic systems.

Next, Augustine introduces the concept of creation being bestowed with the 'life' of Christ, which is the 'light' of mankind (*quod factum est, in eo vita est, et vita erat lux hominum*). The image of the 'life' and 'light' of God implicitly refers to Christ, and it is an image which Jesus used to describe himself, as recorded in the Gospel of John, and Matthew. For example: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). This image of light symbolises Christ's goodness, as well as his redemptory and revelatory role for the sins of mankind. Light is presented in the spiritual sense as life because, by dying for the sins of mankind, Christ is thought to have given mankind the possibility of eternal life and therefore redemption from the darkness of sinful death.

Wildberg (2019) describes how, according to Greek philosophy, the *logos* was considered the divine reason implicit in the cosmos, ordering it and giving it form and meaning. Light is also a symbol of the highest wisdom and truth in Plotinus. Though Plotinus was not a Christian, according to O'Meara (1995:98), the idea that God is light can be seen in his writings, in which the incorporeal light gives splendour to the whole of creation. Light comes from 'the One', and light in the universe is an image of this archetypal Good. Coloe (2011:65) asserts that the Word in John's gospel is accorded the role of the principle of God active in the creation and the continuous structuring of the cosmos, as well as revealing the divine plan of salvation to man. Through the comparison between Neoplatonic ideas and scriptural assertions about the role of Christ, Augustine establishes the idea of Jesus Christ as the intermediary between God and the

world, which bestows all beauty and life to the world, and the medium through which the human mind can apprehend God.

Pearson (2007:304) asserts that, in Manichaeism, it was the primary elements of light, the Living soul, that gave life to beings, and that Jesus the Splendour was the revelatory figure, provider of wisdom and salvation through *gnosis*. Augustine dismantles in this passage the cosmic role of the Manichaean notion of Christ and furthermore stresses the significance of Christ as God's son, who suffered pain and death for the sins of man, and who came as a mediator between man and God.[41] According BeDuhn (2013:2), it was through Manichaeism that Augustine realised the importance of Christ. In this passage of the *Confessions* however, it appears to me that, while Augustine carries the idea of the importance of Christ through to his understanding and formulation of Catholic Christianity, he offers new meaning to Christ's identity by emphasizing his role in the trinity, and as God's Son.

The next line of scripture which is quoted in 7.9.13 professes the predominance of light over darkness (*et lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non conprehenderunt*). This is in direct contrast to what the Manichaeans believed about the corruption of particles of light by the realm of darkness, as well as their suggestion that God requires inferior realities to bring about the liberation of particles of Himself. According to the passages from which Augustine quotes, God, the light, is inviolable and all powerful. There are echoes here to the Neoplatonic idea that matter, or darkness and chaos, is governed by a higher power. As Wildberg (2019) elaborates, if left to its own device, chaos would naturally increase, and things would become more and more disrupted and disturbed, if not for the intervention of conscious and animate beings. The only way conscious and ordered creatures can come into being is by some divine power. The light thus masters the chaotic darkness.

In section 2.3.2 of this thesis, it was mentioned that the Manichaean God was considered entirely pure and good. However, through its continuous struggle with the realm of darkness, the power of God and the realm of light was limited, corrupted, and impinged upon by the

[41] Augustine *Confessions* 7.9.14: *quod autem ante omnia tempora et supra omnia tempora inconmutabiliter manet unigenitus filius tuus, coaeternus tibi… et filio unico tuo non pepercisti, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidisti eum… , ut venirent ad eum laborantes et onerati et reficeret eos, quoniam mitis est et humilis corde* ("Your only begotten Son, coeternal with you, abides before all ages and above all ages…you did not spare even your only Son, but delivered him up for us all…so that those who toil under heavy burdens may come to him and he may give them relief, because he is gentle and humble of heart").

violent activity of darkness. In opposition to this, Augustine presents an omnipotent, good, creator God, who can never be changed or corrupted.

Augustine continues to assert:

> *hominis anima, quamvis testimonium perhibeat de lumine, non est tamen ipsa lumen, sed verbum, deus ipse, est lumen verum, quod inluminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum*
>
> "The human soul, even though it bears testimony about the Light, is not itself the Light, but that God, the Word, is the true Light, which illumines every person who comes into this world" (7.9.13).

Augustine veers slightly away from a direct quotation of John here, replacing what is generally held to refer to John the Baptist, with the *hominis anima* that bears testimony about Christ. Augustine could have modified the passage so that it corresponded better in his comparison of scripture with Neoplatonism, however, this inclusion of the soul also undermines the Manichaean belief that part of man's soul is made from particles of God, and this contradiction of a core tenet of Manichaeism could be another reason for the modification. As mentioned earlier, the Manichaeans believed that part of the human soul contained particles of light, the mind or the 'good soul', which had remained untarnished by the powers of darkness, thus imagining that humans were of the same nature as God (see section 2.3.4).

According to Brown (2000:90), Augustine read the Platonic books when he was still emerging from ways of thought that had led him to favour the Manichaeans. He had favoured the idea that the individual was entirely merged with the substance of God, and everything that could not be identified with this "fragment of perfection," he had cast aside as absolutely and irredeemably evil. Plotinus was able to free Augustine from this dilemma. According to O'Meara (1995:66), Plotinus conveyed that the spiritual world, while fundamental to the material world, touching everything and giving it form and meaning, nevertheless remained distinct from the material world and was in no way violated or diminished.

Brown (2000:91) argues that this shifted the very 'centre of gravity' of Augustine's spiritual life. He learned that God was utterly transcendent, and in realizing this, Augustine had to accept that he was separate and different from God.[42] Thus, Augustine asserts in the words of scripture

[42] Vaught (2004:10) makes an important distinction between Augustine's views on God and those of Plotinus and points out that for Augustine, God created the world from *nothing* and the world participates in God by reflecting

that the soul is not itself the same nature as God, but it is able only to be illuminated by Christ, the Word and the true light of God. Such illumination of the soul allows it to bear testimony about the presence of God. He elaborates on this theory of illumination further in book 7.

BeDuhn (2010:180) postulates that by encountering close parallels between Neoplatonic and Manichaean discourse about the soul's likeness to God, its descent into the world, and its aspirations to ascend, Augustine also discovered "new settings" for these themes based on alternative, metaphysical principles. According to BeDuhn, Augustine realised that this alternative way of thinking could fulfil his spiritual and intellectual objectives "as well as Manichaeism had, if not better." I posit that Augustine is trying to demonstrate in his *Confessions* that the abstract notions of Neoplatonism fulfilled his desire for the truth *far better* than Manichaeism had, as he treats a materialistic, and Manichaean, way of thinking as the root of all of his limitations as a thinker.[43]

Finally, Augustine establishes the main features of his theology through quoting from John, and he further emphasises the infallibility of the arguments presented in John by saying that the Word is Jesus Christ and by his participating in his Word, we become wise (*quia participatione manentis in se sapientiae renovantur, ut sapientes sint* [7.9.14]). Van Oort (2012:199) argues that it is through Augustine that western Christianity developed this dependence on scripture; and that this idea was also encouraged by his anti-Manichean feelings. Torchia (1999:136) explains that the Manichaeans would have read various books of scripture, but these were isolated mainly to the New Testament and furthermore to the writings of Paul. The Manichaeans also attributed truth to the writings of Mani and would distort the scriptural teachings to fit those of Mani. Cameron (2012:205) puts forth that Augustine came to understand the Old and New Testament as sharing a single identity, that of the Word/Christ, and that the Manichaean rejection of the Old Testament was both "self-destructive" and "defaced" Christ. Wisdom is a key word for the Manichaeans, and by asserting that in "participating in his Word, we become wise", Augustine is possibly suggesting that reading the whole of scripture would allow for the full and truer meaning of the isolated texts that the

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his goodness, while according to Plotinus, the 'One' brings the world forth from *itself*, but keeps itself separate (emphasis in italics my own).

[43] For example in Augustine *Confessions* 5.11.21: *sed me maxime captum et offocatum quodam modo, deprimebant corporalia cogitantem moles illae, sub quibus anhelans in auram tuae veritatis liquidam et simplicem respirare non poteram* ("But most of all it was those massive substances that weighed me down as I thought in terms of bodies; it was as though they pinned me fast and choked me as under their weight I gasped for the pure and unpolluted air of your truth, but found myself unable to breathe it").

Manichaeans would have encountered. Augustine uses scripture to make a point about the importance of scripture.

O'Donnell (1992:415) furthermore argues that, although the Platonic books brought the young Augustine new-found spiritual understanding of God, they still left him somewhat disappointed. This, like the *Hortensius*, drove him toward scriptural authority, where he found that his understanding of God in a spiritual sense afforded him the ability to interpret and comprehend the meaning behind the words of scripture. This degree of understanding was beyond that which he was to accomplish while engaged in a Manichaean way of thinking.

Augustine's relationship with scripture is a constant theme throughout the *Confessions*, and he frequently uses the words of scripture where his own fail him. Brown (2000:155) argues that the historical Augustine had come to see that an understanding and exposition of scripture was fundamental to a bishop's life, and his narrative in the *Confessions* is diagnosed as either a failure or a success at accepting the bible. Brown believes that when Augustine became bishop of Hippo, he tried to ensure that he was not seen by his congregation as a distant figure like Ambrose, preaching from afar and seen only from the outside. In the *Confessions*, the narrator tells his readers exactly how he struggled along his spiritual journey. He carries his readers into his thought processes and his meditations on the books of scripture, and his narrative is infused with a yearning to find God at the innermost part of his being.

Moreover, there is a striking contrast between Augustine's and the Manicheans' interpretation of words of scripture, because the Manichaeans based their interpretation on a literal reading. Rist (1994:23) argues that from Cicero and from his rhetorical training and teaching, Augustine acquired the practical and theoretical concern with words as "tools of persuasion." Rist mentions the expression that Augustine uses in his *Reconsiderations* (1.6), that words can "lead the student from the corporeal to the incorporeal by certain definite steps." It appears to me that this concern envelops book 7 of his *Confessions* too. In the passages that follow 7.9.13, Augustine offers an interpretation of the words of John that he has just quoted, which surpasses the words themselves. He transforms light into an invisible and spiritual quality of God that is utterly transcendent, and thus persuades his readers towards a new theology and new spirituality.

3.5. Seeing the Light

Augustine's account of what he read in the Platonic books functions as the starting point for his outlining of a theory of knowledge of God and illumination which takes him to the end of

book 7. I argue in this section that this theory of knowledge is one which opposes God as a *lucem incommutabilem* to the Manichaean *phantasmata*, and ultimately subverts their very doctrine based on the struggle between light and darkness. The theory can thus be understood as an account created and formulated in opposition to Mani's doctrine. It furthermore forms a part of the educational exercise (*exercitatio animi*) which Augustine has implemented, in that he now offers solutions to the problems he has raised earlier in book 7. However, this exercise is not yet complete. Augustine reveals in the subsequent books of the *Confessions* how much his young self still had to grow before he was able to arrive at certainty and conversion.

Augustine, having described how he became furnished with a new, abstract way of thinking, takes the opportunity to elaborate on how and where he sought to locate an immaterial God. The images used in the outlining of his theory of knowledge of God echo the images of the eyes and sight in the opening passages of book 7, as the young Augustine attempts again a vision of God, but these images are rendered in a decidedly figurative sense. According to Vaught (2004:30), Augustine uses figurative discourse when discussing the relationship between the soul and God, as images and metaphors bind the two together and provide Augustine with the vocabulary to make sense of the inexplicable. As discussed in section 1.1. of this thesis, figurative language for Augustine was based on the view that creation revealed God and that symbolic language was necessary in order to convey and to understand metaphysical realities which could not be explained in literal terms. As I hope to demonstrate in the following sections of the thesis (3.5.1-3.5.3), Augustine uses figurative language in order to transform his readers' thought processes and how they conceptualised the divine.

Miles (1983) investigates Augustine's use of physical vision as a model for the vision of God in two of his works, *De trinitate* and the *Confessions.* She argues that sight was an effective metaphor for knowledge used by classical authors, since these authors relied on the physics of vision of that period, namely that:

> "a ray of light, energized and projected by the mind toward an object, actually touches its object, thereby connecting viewer and object. By the vehicle of the visual ray, the object is not only "touched" by the viewer, but also the object is "printed" on the soul of the viewer" (Miles 1983:127).

This theory of vision insists on the connection between viewer and object in the act of vision, and according to Miles, it was this theory of vision which Augustine used as a model for his account of the possibility of an interaction between God and the human soul. Allers (1952:27)

also asserts that, for Augustine, light is the principle of all cognition. In the case of vision with the bodily eyes, this is "corporeal" light, while intellectual cognition requires an "intelligible" or "incorporeal" light.

3.5.1. Attempt at Ascent to the Light

The narration of 7.10.16 describes the young Augustine's attempt at something akin to Platonic ascent, so that he might contemplate his new understanding of God. Augustine describes how, at that time, he "entered…the innermost places of [his] being", and in contrast to his condition of visual impairment before reading the books of the Platonists, he was now able to see and see with the vision of his spirit rather than with his carnal eyes:

> *intravi et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra eundem oculum animae meae, supra mentem meam, lucem incommutabilem: non hanc vulgarem et conspicuam omni carni, nec quasi ex eodem genere grandior erat*
>
> "I entered, then, and with the vision of my spirit, such as it was, I saw the incommutable light far above my spiritual ken, transcending my mind: not this common light which every carnal eye can see, not any light of the same order but greater" (7.10.16).

In this passage, Augustine makes clear first *how* he attempted to perceive God, saying that he looked within (*intravi*) and used the "vision of [his] spirit" (*oculo animae meae*). He then describes *what* he saw with this vision, namely the "incommutable light" (*lucem incommutabilem*) which was no "common light which every carnal eye can see" (*non hanc vulgarem et conspicuam omni carni*) but "greater" (*grandior*). He finally elucidates *where* this light was situated, and says that it was "far above [his] spiritual ken, transcending [his] mind" (*supra eundem oculum animae meae, supra mentem meam*).

I examine first *how* Augustine says he came to see God; Augustine opposes this inward vision to the kind of outward gaze that had hindered him before (see section 3.2 and 3.3 above), where his idea of God was based on material images that his bodily eyes perceived. God is now being portrayed as located beyond the bounds of sensory vision and rather perceived with his spiritual senses. He directs his gaze inward, to his inner self (*animae meae*).

Lootens (2012:56) describes how in a number of Augustine's writings where he discusses a Christian's relationship and experience of God, Augustine suggests that in addition to the bodily senses, the human being possesses the spiritual senses, and it is only through these senses that we are capable of perceiving God. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Van Oort finds that in book 10 of the *Confessions* (2013b:159), Augustine rejects the idea that God can be

perceived through the physical senses, but still uses the five senses to describe how to know God. Instead of the physical senses, he speaks of their spiritual counterparts, and in a clearly incorporeal way. It is clear that Augustine is using the "scheme" of physical vision in 7.10.16 to describe his inward vision of God, and I argue that he does this in order to reiterate a theme he has applied in the early passages of book 7, namely the inadequacy of corporeal vision and the necessity of an inner sensory life.

Augustine next describes the object of his vision, God, using the image of light. It can be argued that the image of light is nothing more than a metaphor for truth or for the divine. However, Allers (1952:31) makes an important point that, according to ancient theory of physical vision, the object of vision is not itself light, but that which is illuminated by light. In this passage of the *Confessions*, God cannot be assumed to be the *object* of the young Augustine's vision, if Augustine is basing this vision on physical vision, as God would surely be considered the light itself. Allers (1952:31-32) provides an insightful summary of the four types of objects of vision which he finds in Augustine's theory of illumination, which clarifies what this light was that Augustine saw.

First, there are sensible things, which the mind ascertains by means of the five senses of the body, and by corporeal light which was believed to proceed from the eyes. Second, there are mental images, "seen" by a spiritual kind of vision which renders the mind cognizant of things not actually present but retained in memory. Third, there are rational truths, of which there are two types: sensible truths which are expressed in judgments formed by reason, and intellectual truths which are also referred to as eternal verities or forms. These deal with abstract concepts, which are other than sensible things or images. Lastly, there are all truths which the mind cannot attain by means of its reasoning power and of which it becomes aware only by faith and through God's grace and revelation.

According to Allers (1952:34), where the sensible things are illumined by corporeal light, the last three objects of vision are all illumined by incorporeal light. Augustine also speaks about two kinds of this incorporeal light, one created and one uncreated. The created incorporeal light illuminates both memory images and eternal verities and, according to Allers, is often called by Augustine the light of reason. Allers adds that the uncreated incorporeal light refers to God, and it is the kind of light which illumines the fourth object of vision, the truths which the mind would not be able to attain without God's intervention. Thus, I deduce that in 7.10.16, Augustine is saying that he saw God, not as an object of vision, but merely that he saw God existed as the increate incorporeal light which illumines the mind. Augustine describes with

the image of light how he came to see with his inner understanding that God existed, but existed in a completely different way to the way other realities exist. He describes God as "something different, utterly different" (*sed aliud, aliud valde ab istis omnibus*).

In order to demonstrate *where* he saw this increate incorporeal light, it seems Augustine draws from what he read in the *libri platonicorum*. Wildberg (2019) describes how, according to the Platonists, the human soul consists of the lower irrational soul, what Augustine calls his spirit here (*oculo animae meae*), and a higher rational soul (the mind), which is where Augustine located the light. In order to catch a glimpse of the higher light, the young Augustine had to transcend his spirit, and use his mind or intellect, which is the highermost point that he could reach. As Gardner (2013:84) discusses, for Augustine, any vision of God is purely a product of God's grace, whereby the Word takes over and empowers the mind so that one may see the 'higher' light. This description of seeing the incorporeal and increate light of God provides a striking contrast to Mani's teachings about perceiving God in the material world, and evidences the young Augustine's Platonic turn.

For Mani it was what the eyes and the senses could perceive in the world that provided the demonstration and evidence of the truth of his revelations. God was considered light in the physical sense, what Augustine calls here a "common light which every carnal eye can see." In opposition to this view, the narrator Augustine shows how God cannot be sought with bodily eyes, nor held by touch or heard by words, but God is an inaccessible light and can only be perceived by grace, or, as Augustine puts it, if God becomes your helper (*Et inde admonitus redire ad memet ipsum, intravi in intima mea, duce te, et potui, quoniam factus es adiutor meus* [7.10.16]).

Like the *medicus* in 7.8.12, this *adiutor* who helped the young Augustine to attain the vision of the *lux incommutabilis* most likely refers to Christ, or the Word. O'Connell (1996:122) mentions that it is often claimed by scholars that book 7 is Augustine's "intellectual" conversion, while book 8 recounts his "moral" or "religious" conversion. Here, Augustine's referral to God as his helper is one of the many expressions he employs in the *Confessions* to inform his readers that there was already a moral-religious, a "grace-component", at the very heart of his so-called intellectual conversion. Without that divine aid, he is assuring us, he would never have been able to "see" what he is about to see. Indeed, even to "return to [him]self" and to his spiritual "insides," he was in need of God's help.

In the previous section (3.3), it was mentioned that, in Manichaeism, wisdom was reserved for Mani and the Elect of the church. Augustine, however, presents the idea in 7.8.12 that anyone can come to the truth and experience God's illumination if they engage in a vigorous and pious quest. Allers (1952:35) argues that once Augustine realized the significance of John 1:14 more fully, where it is said that the light "illumines every man coming into this world", he considered that every person may seek God, and seeing God is independent of the state of their soul. The pious quest, however, will arrive at a better comprehension of certain truths. I argue that throughout book 7, but particularly in 7.10.16 and the passages that follow, Augustine shows his readers how he personally attempted a pious quest, and thus, the manner by which they may conduct their own.

Augustine continues in 7.10.16 to elaborate on the unchangeable quality of God as light, which he saw through philosophical vision, and coaches his readers' minds to more clearly grasp the distinction he has raised between visible-corporeal and incorporeal realities, between ordinary light visible to the bodily eyes, and this vastly other kind of light which only the inner eye of the mind can see. O'Connell (1996:128) argues that, thus far, the corrections which Augustine has made to his past materialist way of thinking about God still operate on a visible-corporeal level, proper to ordinary light. This might be because Augustine was preparing the minds of his readers as it were, although he may not yet have succeeded in bridging the chasm between visible-corporeal conceptions and this "different, utterly different" spiritual realm. According to O'Connell, Augustine suspects that part of the difficulty may lie in the very language he has been using. And so, Augustine tries to elucidate, contrasting the terms *supra* (higher) and *superior* (exalted):

> *nec ita erat supra mentem meam, sicut oleum super aquam, nec sicut caelum super terram; sed superior, quia ipsa fecit me, et ego inferior, quia factus ab ea*
>
> "Nor was it higher than my mind in the sense that oil floats on water or the sky is above earth; it was exalted because this very light made me, and I was below it because by it I was made" (7.10.16).

Augustine's point here is to show that the difference between a corporeal and incorporeal light must not be confused with a quantitative difference in magnitude or expanse. These qualifications are well designed to speak against the Manichaean conception of the realm of light which, as Leurini (2009:171) points out, was positioned in a very specific position in the cosmic order, above all other components of the universe in terms of spatial distance, and

furnished with an 'earthly' structure. O'Connell (1996:128) argues that Augustine is telling his readers that "higher" or "lower" should be understood not as indicating *spatial* relationships in the visible corporeal world, but as expressing the *intelligible* relationship whereby the creator is metaphysically superior to what it makes, and where every cause is superior to its effect. It is certainly clear that Augustine is entrenching the idea that man and God are completely separate and do not share the same nature. He adds that "anyone who knows truth knows it, and whoever knows it knows eternity. Love knows it" (*qui novit veritatem, novit eam, et qui novit eam, novit aeternitatem. caritas novit eam*). There is an appeal to the Manichaean audience here with the inclusion of the word truth, as we have seen Augustine use a number of times. This is to me the final unambiguous cue that the entire passage of 7.10.16 is directed at the Manichaean reader.

Augustine continues in a burst of religious enthusiasm, expressed in a kind of dialogue between his narrated self and God, although the words of praise likely represent the author's voice:

> *o aeterna veritas et vera caritas et cara aeternitas! tu es deus meus, tibi suspiro die ac nocte. et cum te primum cognovi, tu assumsisti me, ut viderem esse, quod viderem, et nondum me esse, qui viderem. et reverberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei, radians in me vehementer, et contremui amore et horrore: et inveni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis, tamquam audirem vocem tuam de excelso: cibus sum grandium: cresce et manducabis me. nec tu me in te mutabis sicut cibum carnis tuae, sed tu mutaberis in me.*
>
> "O eternal Truth, true Love, and beloved Eternity, you are my God, and for you I sigh day and night. As I first began to know you, you lifted me up and showed me that while that which I might see exists indeed, I was not yet capable of seeing it. Your rays beamed intensely upon me, beating back my feeble gaze, and I trembled with love and dread. I knew myself to be far away from you in a region of unlikeness, and I seemed to hear your voice from on high: "I am the food of the mature; grow then, and you will eat me. You will not change me into yourself like bodily food: you will be changed into me." (7.10.16).

Apart from the eucharistic overtones, there are a number of Manichaean echoes in the above passage, the terms of praise especially reminiscent of the Manichaean psalms. Eddy (2009:341) argues that one of the clearest aspects of a Manichaean influence on Augustine is his spirituality, and that, when reading the *Confessions*, one is reminded of the Manichaean

Psalms. The words and phrases which have echoes of the Manichaean way of praising God in the above passage include the words *veritas* and *vera*, the description of sighing for God *die ac nocte*, and *radians in me*. Brown (2000:35) also indicates that the author Augustine would have attended the Manichaean conventicles and heard the 'Letter of the Foundation' of Mani. At this solemn event, the Hearers were supposedly 'filled with light' and this was the basic religious experience of a new member of the Manichaean church, where he was said to become aware of his own mixed state. Augustine's depiction here of God's rays beaming upon him as he first began to know God have echoes of this moment of illumination in Manichaeism, and I argue that these familiar expressions would have drawn the attention of the potential Manichaean reader.

Furthermore, the use of food imagery is reminiscent of the Manichaean dietary rituals where particles of light are changed from their mingled state with darkness and released as pure light through the workings of the stomach of the *electi*. However, the God in Augustine's passage asserts that He will not be changed into man, but man will be changed into Him. There is a transformative promise here in the assurance that this version of God will transform his addressees, and furthermore, the "unlikeness" of man and God is again established. By including echoes from Manichaeism, but overturning the Manichaean belief about God in the assertion that God and man are not of the same nature, this passage can be argued to contain an appeal to the Manichaeans to change their way of thinking, bolstered by the promise of transformation (*sed tu mutaberis in me*).

Also, in the above passage of 7.10.16, Augustine demonstrates that his young self was not yet fully ready to see God. That his gaze was "feeble" likely refers to the fact that he was not yet pious enough to be afforded a longer view of God (*et cum te primum cognovi, tu assumsisti me, ut viderem esse, quod viderem, et nondum me esse, qui viderem*). The young Augustine still had much learning to do. Miles (1983:131) demonstrates that just as the bodily eyes require the most strenuous exercise and strengthening before they can see strongly illuminated objects, so the eye of the mind requires intensive exercise and training before it can see eternal truth, however momentarily. I find that this idea is implemented in the presence of long philosophical and theological discussions following 7.10.16, which carries with it Augustine's concern that his readers' minds be suitably trained and exercised before he narrates his next vision of God in 7.17.23, and again in 9.10.23-26.

Augustine ends 7.10.16 by asserting that his young self had come to know with certainty that God is not spread out through space like sunlight, and that his newly discovered version of the truth exists. He was left with no doubt:

> *dixi: numquid nihil est veritas, quoniam neque per finita neque per infinita locorum spatia diffusa est? et clamasti de longinquo: ego sum qui sum. et audivi, sicut auditor in corde, et non erat prorsus unde dubitarem, faciliusque dubitarem vivere me, quam non esse veritatem, quae per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspicitur*
>
> "I said, "Is truth then a nothing, simply because it is not spread out through space either finite or infinite?" Then from afar you cried to me, "By no means, for I am who am." I heard it as one hears a word in the heart, and no possibility of doubt remained in me; I could more easily have doubted that I was alive than that truth exists, truth as it is seen and understood through the things that are made" (7.10.16).

Augustine seems to consider this narration of a direct and immediate vision of God an experience that would leave no room for doubting God's existence, for his potential Manichaean readers too. As O'Connell (1996:107) highlights, from the opening words of 7.11.17 until 7.16.22, Augustine uses terms such as *vidi*, *cognovi*, and *manifestatum est mihi* which are all terms which underscore the fact that his narrated self had now passed beyond the need to believe or have faith in his new understanding of God, and had arrived at "knowledge, insight, understanding and certainty". He had actually seen that his idea of God was the truth. According to Brown (2000:39), the followers of Manichaeism were educated in such a way as to accept no appeal other than reason, and, because of this, I believe the passages following 7.10.16 may be especially compelling to them. It seems to me that Augustine is demonstrating that he no longer needed to see reality with his bodily eyes in order to believe that it existed, as he had while he was confined to a materialist, and Manichaean, way of thinking. This is a subtle call to his Manichaean audience that they need no longer believe in only what their eyes can see either. He has provided personal proof that a spiritual vision of God is not only possible but is the true way of seeking God.

In view of the fact that the Manichaean religious practice was so sensory because of its concept of God as physical light substance, it seems quite likely that in his speaking of God as light in 7.10.16, and in his very theology, Augustine was influenced by the Manichaeans' manner of speaking. However, when he questions how he would be able to see God, his answer stresses that it has nothing to do with seeing with the bodily eyes. I believe that the language which

Augustine uses in 7.10.16 to describe his theory on how to know God has allusions to Manichaeism, but opposes their doctrine of light and illumination, presenting his readers with a new system that makes more rational sense. It can thus be considered an exhortation to his Manichaean audience to convert to the way of thinking he has advocated in this passage.

3.5.2. New Light on the Problem of Evil

Augustine describes how his young self, furnished now with an understanding that God is utterly transcendent, returned to his deliberations on the question of the origin of evil, to which he had yet to grasp a satisfactory answer. According to O'Connell (1996:107), the problem of God's nature in relation to the origin of evil, along with all the 'subproblems' connected with it, could not be resolved to Augustine's satisfaction until he first *saw* that a higher, spiritual world truly existed, and until he learned to think of that reality in spiritual terms. O'Connell (1996:108) argues that in order to buttress this central conviction, the young Augustine had to come to a number of supporting convictions as well: that there were higher and lower grades of reality; that the spiritual world was real, and "vastly other" from any sensible reality; and that he himself was confined to this lower "region of unlikeness." Moreover, he came to understand that beings are more or less 'real' depending on how subject they are to change.[44] He then applies this insight to the property of goodness.

The arguments that he sets forth in 7.13.19 are again in opposition to a Manichaean conception of evil in the world. Firstly, Augustine says here that he would never be so bold as to say that something in the universe created by God should not exist. He mentions that even "the dragons and all the depths… fire, hail, snow, ice, and stormy winds" (*dracones et omnes abyssi, ignis, grando, nix, glacies, spiritus tempestatis*) all praise God and obey God's word, as well as "the mountains and hills, fruit bearing trees and all cedars, wild beasts and tame, creeping creatures and birds on the wing" (*montes et omnes colles, ligna fructifera et omnes cedri, bestiae et omnia pecora, reptilia et volatilia pinnata*). All of the elements listed here have special reference to Mani's teachings, in which creeping creatures, beasts, and the harsh stormy elements were declared to come from the evil powers of darkness and were therefore considered evil. Fruit bearing trees and animals too were made up of matter and were therefore

[44] Augustine *Confessions* 7.11.17: *Et inspexi cetera infra te, et vidi nec omnino esse nec omnino non esse: esse quidem, quoniam abs te sunt, non esse autem, quoniam id quod es non sunt. id enim vere est, quod incommutabiliter manet* ("Contemplating other things below you, I saw that they do not in the fullest sense exist, not yet are they completely non-beings: they are real because they are from you, but unreal inasmuch as they are not what you are. For that alone truly is, which abides unchangingly").

considered partly evil, in that they still contained some light elements (see section 2.3.3). Both the Manichaean God and his evil opposing principle were understood as immanent in the world, and thus the whole visible world was viewed as a manifestation of the cosmic struggle between light and darkness. The Manichaeans were convinced that the visible world ought never to have existed, and that matter was positively repulsive. Augustine is emphasizing the point that all creations in the world are made good because they are made by God. He continues with echoes from Manichaeism:

> *cum vero etiam de caelis te laudent, laudent te, deus noster, in excelsis omnes angeli tui, omnes virtutes tuae, sol et luna, omnes stellae et lumen, caeli caelorum et aquae, quae super caelos sunt, laudent nomen tuum: non iam desiderabam meliora, quia omnia cogitabam.*
>
> "But since in heaven too your creatures praise you, our God, let all your angels tell your praises on high, let all your powers extol you, sun and moon, all stars and the light, the empyrean and the waters above the heavens: let them too praise your name. No longer was I hankering for any elements to be better than they were, because I was now keeping the totality in view" (7.13.19).

As seen in section 2.3.3, the Manichaeans believed that the sun, moon and some of the other cosmic elements were in a sense divine, and that in this way, God could be seen in the cosmos. However, Augustine asserts here that, at the time he recounts, he no longer believed these to be "better than they were," affirming that all creations are lesser than their creator, the sole supreme God. The fundamental petition here concerns the principle of monotheism.

In 7.14.20, Augustine continues to dispute the dualistic nature of Manichaeism, whereby all evil is attributed to the separate and independent realm of darkness. He again presents these ideas as merely opinions and not grounded in the truth:

> *et quia non audebat anima mea, ut ei displiceret deus meus, nolebat esse tuum quidquid ei displicebat. et inde ieret in opinionem duarum substantiarum, et non requiescebat et aliena loquebatur.*
>
> "Since my soul did not dare to find my God displeasing, it was unwilling to admit that anything that displeased it was truly yours. This was why it had strayed away into believing in a duality of substances, but there it found no rest, and only mouthed the opinion of others" (7.14.20)

While these passages do not contain images of light and darkness, they are important in their allusions to Manichaeism, which becomes the starting point for the development of a more positive view of the world. Creeping creatures, fire, hail, and snow are turned towards God, and the perception of these elements and beings turned towards recognizing the divine goodness and order into which they were created. And Augustine feels entitled to claim with certainty and not merely on the basis of faith, that this new view of God and creation made far more sense to his young self than the dualistic "madness" the Manichaeans had proposed to him:

> *sed posteaquam fovisti caput nescientis, et clausisti oculos meos, ne viderent vanitatem, cessavi de me paululum, et consopita est insania mea; et evigilavi in te et vidi te infinitum aliter, et visus iste non a carne trahebatur*
>
> "But when you cradled my stupid head and closed my eyes to the sight of vain things so that I could absent me from myself awhile, and my unwholesome madness was lulled to sleep, then I awoke in you and saw you to be infinite, but in a different sense; and that vision in no way derived from the flesh" (7.14.20).

Augustine is playing here on the word *sanus* and its opposite *insania*, which is an echo of the Manichaean motifs of sickness and health, but according to Van Oort (2013b:156), the word *insani* was also commonly used as a derogatory term for the Manichaeans.[45] The image illustrates how, just as bodily sickness can affect our everyday judgments, so too can soul-sickness. The young Augustine's "unwholesome madness" made him "stupid", but God helped him to close his eyes and to fall asleep. This imagery of sleep and wakefulness is related to the image of blindness and sight and recurs in the *Confessions*, particularly in the passages leading up to the narration of Augustine's conversion in book 8. Sleep, blindness and darkness symbolise a condition of unawareness or lack of understanding, and it was God who awoke him to a truth that was completely opposite to his previous materialist viewpoint. Augustine describes how he awoke to a vision that "in no way derived from the flesh." The image of God who cradled the young Augustine's head is reminiscent of the passage in 7.18.12, which portrays God as the *medicus* Who would heal Augustine's puffy eyes. At this point, his eyes were being closed by God to vain things, and he awoke to a vision which was no longer

[45] Van Oort (2013b:157) mentions that Mani, in Greek Μάνης, was nicknamed Μανείς, the aorist participle passive of μαίνομαι, which means to be mad, or out of one's mind.

preoccupied by the outside, material world.[46] The image of restorative sleep is highly illustrative of the spiritually cleansing effect of the transformation in the young Augustine's thought, and signifies his passing from ignorance, lethargy, complacency in false beliefs; to peace of mind, certainty, and even excitement in the truth.

Kotzé (2004:65) finds that images of sleep and wakefulness often constitute the typical vocabulary for descriptions of the *effect* that a protreptic text has on its addressee. Drawing from Augustine's own description of his encounter with a protreptic text, the *Hortensius*, she posits that the presence of words for sleeping and waking respectively indicate the undesired and the desired attitude and activity of the addressee. In 7.14.20, the image of sleep and waking not only illustrates the effect of the young Augustine's intellectual transformation, but also brings with it an exhortation to readers of the *Confessions* to undergo the same transformation or conversion in their thought. This is principally a conversion from a negative dualistic world view, to a positive one centred on monotheism. The fact that this imagery is present in 7.14.20, and is coupled with the echoes from Manichaeism, indicates to me that Augustine's whole discussion on the problem of evil (7.13.19-7.14.20) contains an exhortation to conversion directed at a Manichaean intended readership. Just as the young Augustine was able to be awoken from the lethargy of 'sleep', so too can they if they abandon a Manichaean dualistic way of thinking.

Augustine ends his inquiry into the problem with evil in 7.16.22, by mentioning again that the only evil he could find in the world is the privation of good and the turning away of the will from God. There are echoes to the negative conditions or symptoms of the Manichaean myth in his naming of villains, snakes and maggots, diseased eyes, and sickness. However, he says that these are not inherently evil, only fit for lower material realm:

> *palato non sano poena est et panis, qui sano suavis est, et oculis aegris odiosa lux, quae puris amabilis. et iustitia tua displicet iniquis, nedum vipera et vermiculus, quae bona creasti, apta inferioribus creaturae tuae partibus, quibus et ipsi iniqui apti sunt, quanto*

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[46] In book 10, Augustine mentions figures from the Old Testament whose bodily vision was impaired, but they were nevertheless granted a far more important kind of vision, highlighting the supremacy of an inner vision of God over material vision of material things:
Augustine *Confessions* 10.34.52: *O lux, quam videbat Tobis, cum istis oculis filium docebat vitae viam… aut quam videbat Issac praegravatis et opertis senectute carneis luminibus, cum filios non agnoscendo benedicere, sed benedicendo agnoscere meruit…aut quam videbat Iacob, cum et ipse prae grandi aetate captus oculis in filiis praesignata futuri populi genera luminoso corde radiavit* ("O Light, Tobit saw you when despite the blindness of his carnal eyes he pointed out the path of life to his son…Isaac saw you, though his bodily eyes were dimmed and closed by age, when true insight was granted him in blessing his sons…Jacob saw you when, likewise blinded by advanced age, he beheld by the radiant vision of his heart the tribes of the people that was to be").

> *dissimiliores sunt tibi, apti autem superioribus, quanto similiores fiunt tibi. et quaesivi, quid esset iniquitas, et non inveni substantiam, sed a…te deo, detortae…voluntatis perversitatem*
>
> "…bread, which is pleasant to a healthy palate, is repugnant to a sick one, and …diseased eyes hate the light which to the unclouded is delightful. Villains find even your justice disagreeable, and snakes and maggots far more so, yet you have created these things good, and fit for the lower spheres of your world. Indeed, the villains themselves are fit for the lower realms in the measure that they are unlike you, but for the higher when they come to resemble you more closely. I inquired then what villainy might be, but I found no substance, only the perversity of a will twisted away from you, God" (7.16.22).

The primary message Augustine brings forth about evil is that it cannot be matter or an independent material substance, as the Manichaeans believed evil in the world to be, because if it were, it would be good. Like darkness, which does not exist in itself but only as the absence of light, so is evil simply the absence of good. This solution to the problem of evil in the world, firstly furnishes the Catholic readers of the *Confessions* with an answer to one of the Manichaeans' favourite attacks against Catholicism, and secondly stands in direct confrontation with Manichaean dualism. This indicates to me that this passage was especially written as part of the educational exercise which Augustine has initiated in book 7, and was written primarily to help his potential Manichaean readers to come to the truth, in the same way he did as a young man.

This is further evidenced by the fact that the passages of 7.13.19, 7.14.20, and 7.16.22 all contain the most common element of protreptic literature, namely the portrayal of two alternate "streams" or viewpoints, one dualistic and the other monotheistic and hierarchic, where the latter is positioned as the correct way of viewing reality. Also, themes related to conversion or transformation are present, with the images of sleep and wakefulness in 7.14.20, and with the idea that even villains can aspire to the higher realm if they come to resemble God more closely in 7.16.22. This convinces me that Augustine's conclusions on the problem of evil in the world, depicted in these passages of book 7, contain an exhortation to the potential Manichaean readers to convert from their belief system which teaches a duality of substance, to one that honours a monotheistic, creator God.

3.5.3. Catching a Glimpse of *That Which Is*

The final passage I analyse is the culmination of what I consider the main theme or topic of book 7, namely the progress from a material to a spiritual conception of God and being illumined by God, described through images of vision and light. I have argued that, in the opening passage of the book, Augustine contends with his struggle to see God and the intelligible realm, and using images of blindness and darkness, he directs a message at his Manichaean audience to abandon a materialist way of thinking. As book 7 progresses, Augustine shows how he managed the breakthrough that he so desperately sought and, towards the end of the book, he comes full circle and uses the image of sight to describe how he finally managed to see the truth about God's immaterial nature. Pronouncing God's utter transcendence, Augustine demonstrates to his readers how they too can achieve these insights. In 7.17.23 Augustine describes the vision he was granted of God, and through the imagery of vision, I argue that there emerges once again a message for his Manichaean reader.

Augustine begins 7.17.23 by describing how he no longer had any doubt about the nature of God and that he had even come to love God Himself, rather than some "figment of imagination" instead of God (*quod iam te amabam, non pro te phantasma*). By using the word *phantasma*, Augustine is referring to his previous Manichaean imaginings about God (see section 3.2). Augustine continues and bemoans the fact that, despite loving God, on account of his moral shortcomings and the "weight" of carnal habit, he kept returning to earthly things and was therefore unable to enjoy loving contemplation of God (*moxque diripiebar abs te pondere meo, et ruebam in ista cum gemitu; et pondus hoc consuetudo carnalis).* The first section of 7.17.23 is filled with words that are material or corporeal based, which emphasizes the young Augustine's continued preoccupation with the material world, such as *consuetudo carnalis*; *corpus*; *terrena inhabitatio*; *ea quae facta sunt*; and *corporum sive caelestium sive terrestrium*. Augustine links these phrases to words such as *multa* and *mutabilibus*, which stand in stark contrast to the God which Augustine sought, "the real unchangeable truth, which is eternal" and which soared far above his "changeable mind" (*incommutabilem et veram veritatis aeternitatem supra mentem meam conmutabilem*). This reinforces once again the idea that God cannot be found in the material world, nor imagined as phantasm based on the material world, as the Manichaeans believed.

In 7.17.23, Augustine also uses words that have special association to Manichaeism in a more positive way, such as *verum veritatis* ("real truth"), as well as *sempiterna quoque virtus et divinitas tua* ("your everlasting power also, and your divinity"). Van Oort (2013b:157)

observes that, according to Manichaean doctrine, following Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:24, Christ is the wisdom and power of God. Gardner (2011) also provides a translation of parts of the Manichaean daily prayers and of *The Prayer of the Emanations*, in which the Father of Greatness is called "luminous" and "all truth and life and piety." God's "power and glory" are also venerated (2011:249-251). These descriptors in 7.17.23 therefore have echoes to the Manichaean writings in praise of God and the emanations, and this illustrates that Manichaeism is not only a negative pole from which Augustine formulates Catholic doctrine in the *Confessions*, but also a positive source of inspiration in the way he expresses his faith.

As we saw in 7.10.16, the young Augustine realised that above the mind was Truth itself, and Augustine depicts once again how he attempted to mount to the truth through philosophical meditation. He describes how he pursued his enquiry in stages:

> *a corporibus ad sentientem per corpus animam, atque inde ad eius interiorem vim, cui sensus corporis exteriora nuntiaret, et quousque possunt bestiae*
>
> "from material things to the soul that perceives them through the body, and from there to that inner power of the soul to which the body's senses report external impressions. The intelligence of animals can reach as far as this" (7.17.23).

Augustine's description is formulated in a clear and step-by-step way, and such a rational inquiry would have appealed to the kind of intellectual Manichaean reader who too sought to intellectualise their faith, in order to gain more understanding about their beliefs. At this point, the readers of the *Confessions* have been told by Augustine that a materialist way of thinking must be abandoned, and Augustine elaborates on the kind of world view to replace this way of thinking. This passage concentrates on the distinction between the cognitive faculties of the body, soul, and mind; the higher faculty of intelligence (the inner power of the soul) compared to senses. This demonstrates, although implicitly, that even the human soul is ontologically superior to the material quality of light that the Manichaeans venerated as God.

Augustine has already rejected a negative evaluation of the material world of matter (see section 3.5.2) and he demonstrates in this passage of 7.17.23 that, despite being ontologically inferior to the eternal and supreme God, this material realm is able to reveal God. He develops a kind of 'ascent of the soul', where created reality need not hinder the grasp of eternal truths, but can become the very grounds by which divine truth may be imparted to those who are faithful and pious in their search. According to Lamb (2006:822), Augustine's discovery of the difference between the sensible and the intelligible realm was a rejection of materialist belief

systems, but not a rejection of the physical and sensible itself. Augustine has detailed his disordered attachment to the senses, particularly his use of sight, in the opening passages of book 7, and he demonstrates now that human intelligence, when properly and reverently directed toward God and the truth, enables the senses and imagination to flourish in the right way. Ascending to the intelligible truth and goodness of God does not entail rejecting God's good creation. It was merely through *disordered* desires rooted in pride that the young Augustine failed to acknowledge the goodness and harmony of all things, as created by the infinite goodness of God. Augustine advocates the *primacy* of the internal senses over the physical senses in any attempt to understand and establish a relationship with God. Lootens (2012:69) describes how the return inwards to the spiritual senses offers a model that proclaims God as creator of all, a God Who offers the very fullness of perceptual experience. Such an experience is exactly the opposite of Augustine's pre-conversion life, in which he was frantically searching for fulfilment while infatuated by the bodily senses and curiosities that they provoked in him.

The position which Augustine takes here is hierarchic and whole[47], and stands in contrast to the dualistic and combative Manichaean world view. His position begins with the idea that the material and sensible world can be transcended, first by realising the difference between material and intelligible realms, and secondly by understanding that all creation is good and made by God. Although it is not divine, even matter is good and partakes in God. Indeed, Augustine has an overall optimistic view of the world. According to Fuhrer (2013b:68), while the goal for both Manichaeans and Neoplatonist-Christians was similar in the acquisition of truth from God through illumination or *gnosis*, there is an essential difference in the evaluation of the shortfalls or negative state that comes before illumination. As is evident in *Confessions* 7.13.19-7.14.20, for Augustine, it is important to recognise the good in the bad, wisdom in foolishness, and light in the darkness.

Augustine describes how in order to stretch his reason upward for the source of his intelligence, to the "light…that bedewed it" (*quo lumine aspargeretur*), he first had to withhold his thoughts and the "swarms of noisy phantasms" around him (*contradicentibus turbis phantasmatum*). This links the passage of 7.17.23 to the opening passage of 7.1.1 where Augustine describes

[47] Teske (2009:24) describes the basis of Augustine's view of reality as a three-tiered structure of the universe: "At the top is God, in the middle is the human soul, and at the bottom is the world of bodies." At the lowest level there is "a nature that can change in both place and time, such as body." Next comes "a nature that can in no sense change in place, but can change in time, such as soul." Finally, at the top of the hierarchy there is "a nature that cannot change in either place or in time, and that is God."

his trouble with materialist notions about God (see section 3.2). According to Fuhrer (2013a:547), in book 3 of the *Confessions*, Augustine is careful to differentiate vision of intelligible realities from the Manichaean view that God which could be seen through the senses, as he only considers what they claim to see as being illusions (*phantasmata*), based on no reality, material or spiritual, whatsoever. This differentiation is clear in 7.17.23 too. Augustine is attempting to show his readers that they must not confine their thoughts and reasoning power to the sensory world, but lift their minds to a higher level of rational insight. While the Manichaean phantasms are the product of human conjecture, the reality of God that the young Augustine sought is based on invariable truths that are the product of God's grace. Augustine says of the mind:

> *ut inveniret, quo lumine aspargeretur; cum sine ulla dubitatione clamaret incommutabile praeferendum esse mutabili… et pervenit ad id, quod est, in ictu trepidantis aspectus*
>
> "It strove to discover what this light was that bedewed it when it cried out unhesitatingly that the Unchangeable is better than anything liable to change… And then my mind attained to *That Which Is*, in the flash of one tremulous glance" (7.17.23).

The language that Augustine uses here to describe what he saw is highly compelling, and I argue that it is well-deigned to fulfil a protreptic purpose. He is describing the goal of Platonic ascent,[48] but the phrase *in ictu trepidantis aspectus* is reminiscent of a similar phrase *in ictu oculi* ("twinkling of an eye") in 7.1.1, describing a Manichaean way of thinking that hindered his understanding God. In the context of 7.17.23, it was not material shapes which, in a flash, crowded around the young Augustine and obscured his vision, but a clear and unobstructed vision of God which he achieved in a flash. The presence of this recurring image sets up a comparison between Augustine's lack of cognition while confined to a Manichaean way of thinking, and the success of his rigorous philosophical and theological inquiries. This is effective in showing how much his thought transformed, and the very positiveness of his transformation. The narrated Augustine is without the anxiety that pervaded the opening

[48] Wildberg (2019) discusses how the Platonists presented the experience of contemplation as the closest approach humans could make to union with the 'One', transcending physical experience to reach illumination or at least awareness of the presence of the 'One'. They believed that all people return to the One from which they emanated after death, but that people could also achieve perfection and happiness in the world through this kind of meditation, or ecstasy (Enneads VI 9.6). When the mind goes through the operation of discursive reasoning, it can slip into this timeless moment, which O'Connell (1996:177) describes: "It is a moment of stillness, yet the stillness is electric with a kind of activity as intense as it is effortless; our entire being is concentrated into a singleness of ecstatic vision: we have become pure 'eye'."

passages of the book, and he is portrayed with a clear vision based on the authority of his new-found conception of the divine.

Teske (2009:25) argues that this passage of 7.17.23 reveals Augustine's conviction that the human soul attains happiness only by clinging to God, a God which is described as *That Which Is.* This phrase is an illustration of God's absolute immutability and eternity, not merely in the sense of duration without beginning or end, but in the sense that there is neither past nor future, but only the present in God. According to Teske (2009:27), Augustine was one of the first Christian thinkers, at least in the Latin West, to come to a philosophically articulated concept of God and the soul as non-bodily. He was also the first to come to a concept of divine eternity as having neither past nor future, but only the present. Teske argues that Augustine teaches his readers to think of God as non-bodily and non-temporal so well that it is often assumed that these ultimately Neoplatonic doctrines are explicitly contained in the New Testament.

Augustine provides his readers here with a view of God to which they should adhere, using light as an image of God (*quo lumine aspargeretur*). O'Connell (1996:97) argues that for Augustine, grasping the meaning of any intelligible reality is tantamount to understanding what the reality essentially is, its very essence. In the passage of 7.17.23, the act of seeing with the mind's eye is portrayed as the mental contemplation of the very essence of God. This essence, the unchangeable *lumine* and *That Which Is*, which bedews or enlightens the mind, is completely unlike the divine particles of light of Manichaeism, which are liable to change and destruction, and which form a part of the material universe. This vision which Augustine describes is his ultimate proof that his fundamental notions that God must be inviolable, imperishable, and unchangeable (see section 3.2) are in fact true; he had found an adequate conception of God's nature using terms of light, that corresponds to these qualities. Since the image of light for God in this passage, as well as the *lux incommutabilis* in 7.10.16, does not refer to light as it is understood in Manichaeism, its new context calls to the potential Manichaean reader to reconsider and revise their own views of God as light. Figurative language becomes the way in which Augustine discovered, and now relates, divine truth.

In the final words of 7.17.23, Augustine says that, on account of the weakness of his soul he was only afforded a glance and was forced back to his familiar surroundings, bearing only the memory of what he had seen and a yearning for something which he "had caught the fragrance, but could not yet feast upon" (*non mecum ferebam nisi amantem memoriam et quasi olefacta desiderantem, quae comedere nondum possem*). God is described here in unmistakably Manichaean terms, bringing to mind the idea of God as light particles dispersed in food, and

of the realm of light which is described in Manichaean books as abounding in sweet smelling flowers and melodious sounds. Van Oort (2013b:158) makes the point that Manichaeism was a form of Christian mysticism, and he considers it important to take into account that the impetus of Augustine's own mysticism came from his Manichaean past.

Van Oort (2013b:174) furthermore mentions that contrary to what most people consider, Manichaeism did not only represent a material world view that is involved solely with physical substances. There is a passage in the *Kephalaia* in which Mani himself is said to have spoken of the internal intellectual qualities of "consideration, counsel, insight, thought and mind" through which the soul may ascend to the Father of Greatness. Van Oort argues that such a passage clearly demonstrates that there is the idea of internal and mental process of salvation. Furthermore, the Light-*Nous* is a concept in close association with the Holy Spirit and it is stated in the *Kephalaia* that this Light-*Nous* enters into the Elect and transforms them by freeing the five intellectual qualities of "consideration, counsel, insight, thought and mind." In this way the Elect is changed into a new man, his spiritual intellect is purified, and he can ascend "in his heart to God, the Father" (Van Oort 2013b:174).

The passages from the *Confessions* analysed above therefore have clear allusions to the psychological aspect of the Manichaean perception of God, as well as their materially based perceptions, where both anti-Manichaean and pro-Manichaean elements are present. However, it is clear to me that, for Augustine, any vision of God is an intellectual act- although purely a product of grace- and entirely different to the type of immediate revelation bestowed upon the Elect of the Manichaean church. Further, instead of his spiritual enlightenment being dependent upon his acceptance of materialistic teachings as the truth, also available by external observances, Augustine describes his encounter with God as one that is based on inner observation and reflection, through painstaking intellectual exercise, the suppression of pride, and a loving recognition of God in all things.

Augustine, significantly, seems to employ his images of light and vision in a didactic way, where spiritual notions of God are viewed through concepts intimately familiar to the Manichaean, and thus new understanding of spiritual notions could be achieved by such readers more easily. Augustine might have drawn from classical theories of language, particularly those of Plato. Pender (2003:74) outlines Plato's perspective on metaphor and models and observes that Plato seems to have held that new understanding can be achieved through viewing the less familiar concept through the 'lens' of a more familiar concept. Like Plato, Augustine seems to have been aware of the power of language, particularly figurative language and

images, in bringing two separate spheres into "cognitive and emotional relation" (Pender 2003:74). I posit that by using language appropriate to Manichaeism for viewing Catholic Christian concepts, the implications and values intertwined in Augustine's metaphorical expression of light, vision and illumination, enable the new subject matter to be grasped in a novel way.

Beyond the Manichaean concepts and elements that are present in book 7 of the *Confessions*, and which refer to their cosmological myth or their rituals, is a world that can be seen by the intellect and which is equated with the truth. Augustine guides his readers through the process of allegorical and figurative interpretation, where sensory-based images, such as light, as well as fragrance, food imagery, blindness, and sight are to be understood in the figurative sense, as symbols and references to the intelligible world. As Fuhrer (2013b:64) finds in *De ordine*, Augustine plays with Manichaean imagery and motifs and interprets them as references to another reality, creating "new semantics and a different function for these things and transfers them from a mythological into an ontological system" (2013b:64).

Furthermore, O'Donnell (1992:392) considers that Augustine was always a master of capturing in his words what many of his readers may have had trouble expressing. In book 7 especially, I have found that Augustine gives voice to the anxiety that comes with abandoning the seemingly solid notion of God and the soul infused in the material world, and demonstrates in a clear and rational way, how a new conception of an immaterial and transcendent God in fact gave him more grounding and certainty. O'Connell (1996:116) argues that Augustine presents his readers with a worldview which he seems to feel makes satisfactory sense to such an extent that his readers should examine it and adopt it as their own. According to O'Connell, Augustine does not divert his readers' attention by explaining how long it took him to come by these insights, rather he faces his readers with the challenging question: "Must this not be true for you as well?"

3.6. A Final Word to the Manichaean Reader

In this final section, I examine briefly the last few passages of book 7, which do not contain many instances of light and darkness imagery, but which point to a final message of the book. In 7.20.26, Augustine mentions that even though he had managed to glimpse God, on account of the "darkness of [his] soul", he was not afforded the ability to steadfastly contemplate what he had seen (*quid per tenebras animae meae contemplari non sinerer*). It was still enough for him to become certain that God was infinite and that God truly existed, and existed in what

Augustine deems the fullest sense of existence. However, what was unexpected for the young Augustine, was that this intellectual success proved unsatisfactory. O'Donnell (1992:415) mentions that the young Augustine could finally comprehend the nature of God, but found that he still needed and longed for a firmer standing in God.[49] This triggered Augustine's moral quest, a quest for continence, which marks the culmination of his struggle to find God.

In the final few chapters of book 7, Augustine discusses how he came to realise the importance of Christ as meditator, who would guide him along his path to conversion. He describes in 7.21.27 how he returned to scripture and specifically to the writings of Paul, and the insights he gained in his intellectual discovery allowed him to read scriptures in a new, allegorical light. He describes how he learned "to rejoice with reverence" (*et exultare cum tremore didici*):

> *et coepi et inveni, quidquid illac verum legeram, hac cum conmendatione gratiae tuae dici: ut qui videt non sic glorietur, quasi non acceperit non solum quod videt, sed etiam ut videat*
>
> "So I began to read, and discovered that every truth I had read in those other books was taught here also, but now inseparably from your gift of grace, so that no one who sees can boast as though what he sees and the very power to see it were not from you" (7.21.27).

These words bring to the fore Augustine's emphasis in book 7 on the pious quest to God, where receiving illumination is not determined by ascetic practises, but by first realising and acknowledging God's transcendent nature, and then honouring Him. It comes with turning away from the material world and directing the will towards God, all of this made possible by God's grace. It is significant that Augustine chooses the writings of Paul for his description of returning to books of scripture, rather than Old Testament texts or any other scriptural passage. The Manichaeans were familiar with the Pauline texts, making Augustine's allusions to these texts suggestive of a specific intent to appeal to the Manichaeans. He is likely telling them how their favourite apostle can be read differently. This is more evident in book 8 of the *Confessions*, where Augustine quotes heavily from Paul in his portrayal of his quest for

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[49] Augustine *Confessions* 8.1.1: *de vita tua aeterna certus eram, quamvis eam in aenigmate et quasi per speculum videram; dubitatio tamen omnis de incorruptibili substantia, quod ab illa esset omnis substantia, ablata mihi erat, nec certior de te, sed stabilior in te esse cupiebam* ("Concerning your eternal life, I was now quite certain, though I had but glimpsed it like a tantalising reflection in a mirror, this had been enough to take from me any lingering doubt concerning that imperishable substance from which every other substance derives its being. What I now longed for was not greater certainty about you, but a more steadfast abiding in you").

continence, and in the final moment of his conversion. Along with numerous other scholars, Eddy (2009:324) considers that Augustine experienced his first serious exposure to the writings of the Apostle Paul through a "Manichaean hermeneutical lens." This would mean that Augustine's study of the bible, as described in 7.21.27, was really a bid to *restudy* the bible in order to 'de-Manichaeise' his prior reading.

In book 7, knowing God becomes a necessary condition for the young Augustine's certainty and the beginning of his inner transformation. Since he demonstrates the step by step method by which he achieved this knowledge of God, I have argued that Augustine's aim in book 7 seems to be to transform the way his potential Manichaean readers think and to lead them to conversion too. However, the final message which Augustine seems to be leaving his readers is that, although an intellectual vision uncovered for him a conceptual realm that entirely transcended his thinking, deciding to follow this new conception of God was going to require an act of will that would drastically reorientate his life towards God. Augustine furthermore makes it clear that even garnering the truth from a 'correct' reading of the word of scripture, which helped him with the transformation of his will, was only possible by an intervention of the Word and divine grace. One of his final thoughts is:

> *quid faciet miser homo? quis eum liberabit de corpore mortis huius, nisi gratia tua per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum*
>
> "What is a human wretch to do? Who will free him from this death-laden body, if not your grace, given through Jesus Christ our Lord…?" (7.21.27).

There are echoes here to the negative stance on the body that the Manichaeans held. However, unlike the ascetic practises in Manichaeism which involved controlling and manipulating the body for salutary ends, Augustine couples the image of his "death-laden body" with the chance of being freed by grace only, by Christ and the Word. There are other Manichaean echoes throughout the last few passages of book 7 (7.18.24-7.21.27). For example, there are images of food and Christ being mingled with our flesh in 7.18.24 (*cibum, cui capiendo invalidus eram, miscentem carni*); and in 7.20.26 the image of God healing Augustine's pride and tending his wounds (*et curantibus digitis tuis contrectarentur vulnera mea*). Along with the call to re-read Paul based on a new spiritual or figurative interpretation, it is significant that the closing passages contain echoes to Manichaeism, and this is to me further evidence that the Manichaeans were at the forefront of almost every deliberation put forward by Augustine in book 7, beginning to end.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The formulation of this thesis was based on my survey of previous scholarship, scholarship which, to my mind, has demonstrated convincingly that the *Confessions* holds an appeal to a Manichaean audience, and that Augustine was greatly concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of his former co-religionists at the time of writing his great work. At the outset of the present study, two lines of questioning were articulated with a view of understanding whether the images of light and darkness, and associated images of sight and blindness, contribute to a protreptic communicative purpose of book 7 of the *Confessions*, directed at the potential Manichaean reader.

Firstly, an investigation was carried out into how light and darkness were understood and perceived by followers of Manichaeism. Some of the important aspects which were highlighted included their belief that the 'God of Light' was a material substance, along with all fragmented particles of light, including the soul, and their insistence that evil was a separate material substance and active force in the world. Furthermore, attention was drawn to the guarantee made by Mani that God, or rather emanations of the divine light, could be perceived in the physical universe through natural phenomena and through the cosmic functions of sun and moon. The Manichaeans honoured and venerated these celestial bodies, not as gods, but as the way which allowed access to God. The important note was made that, in order to know the truth, followers of Manichaeism merely needed to cast their eyes outside at the material world and witness what Mani's teachings revealed. God could thus be encountered through the senses, and predominantly through the eyes.

There was also a psychological or spiritual aspect in perceiving God, whereby virtuous or good characteristics present in people were thought to come from God. Also, God was thought to be revealed to the Elect through enlightenment from the Light-*Nous*. Hearers could also be 'filled with light', but rather than signifying wisdom or *gnosis*, this event merely denoted receiving an awareness of the devasting mixture of light and darkness within themselves. It was still believed that a man's good soul, as divine light, was material, and that the Light-*Nous* too was a material substance, although exceptionally 'fine' and 'noble.' In this way, illumination for the Manichaean was vastly different to the inward spiritual vision of an incorporeal light that Augustine describes in book 7 of his *Confessions*.

Further highlighted in Chapter 2 was the fact that the human body was one of the most important avenues in the process of liberating light from darkness, and the individual person

was particularly crucial as they were aware and conscious of the imprisonment of light within darkness, and the way to alleviate the suffering of the light. This value that the Manichaeans ascribed to the human body in freeing particles of God, as well as their materialist literalism, is something which Augustine seems to be determined to overturn and correct in book 7 of the *Confessions*.

The observations of the core aspects of Manichaeism, namely the pervasive struggle between light and darkness and the primacy of the bodily senses in perceiving and alleviating this conflict, was, I hope, a successful attempt at creating a clear picture of the issues in book 7 of the *Confessions* that would have had special significance for a Manichaean reader. Of course, the intended message of this book of the *Confessions* could be deciphered on a certain level without an awareness of these matters. It must, however, be granted that an effort to read even a part of *Confessions* in view of the way that it may have been received by the potential Manichaean reader can only enhance our understanding of the *Confessions* as a whole.

The second line of questioning in this thesis involved the analysis of images of light and darkness in book 7 of the *Confessions*, as well as the associated images of sight and blindness. The aim was to establish the extent to which the images contributed to an exhortation directed at the potential Manichaean reader to abandon the sect and to convert to the Platonic-Christian way of thinking presented and advocated in the text. Book 7 of the *Confessions* is, to me, an exposition purely concerned with the quest to know God. I found that Augustine set up a dichotomy between a materialist and a metaphysical or spiritual understanding of God, and using the images of light, illumination, and vision, showed how God ought to be conceived as an ontologically superior, transcendent being.

The protreptic nature of book 7 is embodied in the, often explicit, refutation of a materialist view of God, the soul, and evil in the world; and the provision of a ‘manner of approach’ in adopting the viewpoint advocated by Augustine, namely an abstract, figurative, and immaterial conception of God as light. Augustine bolsters his appeal with rhetorical techniques such as an urgent and caring tone, the promise of knowledge and truth, the basis of his arguments on philosophical and scriptural authority, the promise of healing and illumination, the educational or spiritual technique of *exercitatio animi*, and recurring images related to transformation, such as blindness and sight, sleep and wakefulness, and darkness and light.

In order for the protreptic message of a text to be effective, the rhetorical features and language which an author uses are usually specifically constructed and finely tuned towards the intended

reader. For this reason, the numerous Manichaean echoes and strategic placement of language which would be familiar to the Manichaeans clearly indicate to me that the Manichaeans form part of the intended audience of the book. To a large extent an awareness of the potential Manichaean reader seems to determine Augustine's manner of reasoning in book 7, and even the themes and topics he handles.

In the opening passages of book 7 (7.1.1-7.1.2), Augustine depicts the struggles and anxieties he faced as a young man after moving away from Manichaeism, particularly with abandoning a materialistic conception of the nature of God. He describes his young self in a condition of blindness and darkness, where the truth about God was obscured by clouds of phantasms. In chapters 7.7.11-7.8.12, Augustine continues to describe his materialist view of reality as a stumbling block which rendered him blind to the truth about God. This time he describes his eyes as puffy and swollen from pride in his adherence to false beliefs.

The images of the obscured vision and disordered use of sight which shape the first half of book 7 have clear allusions to the value that the Manichaeans accorded to the eyes in perceiving God, as well as their belief that God was a material substance which pervaded the universe. Augustine further uses concepts that have echoes to images and concepts found in the Manichaean books regarding the 'symptoms' of their myth, the negative conditions such as blindness and darkness, which result from the tragic intermingling of light and darkness. The Manichaeans were known for presenting their teachings as the truth about the world and as holding the answers to man's every existential question. However, Augustine clearly demonstrates that his former materialistic, and Manichaean, conception of God, as well as his prideful allegiance to these ideas, in fact blocked his comprehension of the truth about God. He dismisses these materialistic and proud beliefs as the blind ignorance of a man not yet illumined by God's truth and light. Augustine further emphasizes that his 'sight' only began to clear once he had departed from the conception of God as a material substance, and Manichaeism becomes the very benchmark from which Augustine measures the progress of young self's ascent to the truth.

In 7.8.12, Augustine introduces the image of God as healer and the promise that God would relieve his blindness, thus allowing him an unobstructed view of God's light. Augustine raises the idea that in order for his condition to be healed, he had to undergo a "painful cure," which was administered by the "unseen touch" of the God whom Augustine addresses. Augustine's use of the image of a *medicus* would have resonated with his Manichaean audience, as both Mani and the figure of Jesus the Splendour were described in their faith as physicians and

illuminators, who bestowed divine and salutary knowledge, or *gnosis* (see section 2.3). However, in the subsequent chapters of book 7, Augustine demonstrates that he was not granted immediate vision or revelation, but he had to spend a long and arduous time developing his understanding of God after he had discarded his Manichaean beliefs. The images of healing are critical to his protreptic project, but also his soteriology. Against the Manichaean gnostic and corporeal views on salvation, it is faith and God's grace which determine the great therapeutic strategy for Augustine.

Augustine continues in book 7 with extended and in-depth discussions, in which he inserts into his reader's minds the difficult theological questions which he tackled at that time, mostly concerned with proving his fundamental belief that God must be inviolable, imperishable, and unchangeable. He discusses the issue of *unde malum* as part of his development of a theodicy, but no solution to the problem is achieved (7.2.3-7.5.7). Augustine then turns to a presentation of what he read in the books of the Platonists (7.9.13). I argue that he presents such a reading not only to demonstrate how they helped him to move away from a materialist way of thinking, but also to refute the core tenets of Manichaeism. Through the words of the prologue of John, the trinitarian concepts of God and the Word are introduced, as well as God's role as creator, His omnipotence, and finally the soul as separate from God.

Following this narration, Augustine spends the latter half of book 7 elaborating on a theology, which is founded on the insights of the Neoplatonists and stands as a well-crafted confutation of the Manichaean theology. The narrator Augustine illustrates that, once he was furnished with a new-found spiritual understanding of God, he found that he is able to construct a world view that corresponded to his fundamental belief that God is "inviolable, imperishable, and unchangeable." It seems purposeful that the narrator points to the fact that he managed to do this without slipping into Manichaean determinism or dualism.

Augustine first provides personal proof, through his depiction of philosophical meditation and vision of God, that the spiritual conception of the divine that he had found in the books of the Platonists represented the truth about God's nature, and that God as a transcendent being existed. Through the depiction of his vision, Augustine outlines his theory of illumination, or theory of knowledge of God. The cardinal point of this theory is that God cannot be seen as an object of vision, but an awareness of God can be achieved only by internal, spiritual vision, if granted by God's grace. This is in stark contrast to the manner in which the Manichaeans believed an awareness of God could be achieved. Augustine presents God as an incorporeal, increate light completely different to any other reality, material or spiritual, and a light which

illumines all otherwise inaccessible truths by his grace. The images he uses echo the images of the eyes and sight in the opening passages of book 7, as Augustine describes how he attempted again a vision of God, but these images are rendered in a decidedly figurative sense.

Augustine demonstrates how this vision left him with no doubt about God's nature and allowed him to make headway with the theological issues that were raised in the first half of the book, and to which Manichaeism had failed to offer a solution. Augustine thus illustrates that his new way of thinking was far more dependable than the Manichaean teachings. The terms and concepts discussed in these episodes of intellectual inquiry are furthermore invoked by elements from Manichaeism, where every insight gained stands as a proof against the Manichaean theology. It is realised that God is the sole creator and that all His creation is good. Further, it is found that there is no substance such as evil, only the turning of a will away from God. The worldview presented is therefore monotheistic and ontologically hierarchic, and leaves the young Augustine with an adequate notion of God that adheres to his axiomatic belief that God is inviolable, imperishable, and unchangeable. Augustine presents and offers to his readers the results of his inquest as a viewpoint which makes rational sense, and the position to adopt if they too seek the truth (a quest to which many young intellectual Manichaeans would relate).

Slowly but surely, Augustine leads the readers of the *Confessions* from a corporeal to an incorporeal view of God by definite steps and proofs, and by transforming the language he uses. From the images of blindness and darkness which prevail in the opening passages of book 7, Augustine turns to images of vision and seeing God in the latter half of the book to illustrate that he had achieved the certainty he so desperately sought and which Manichaeism failed to offer him. Augustine's clear view of God compared to his blindness at the beginning of the book exaggerates the difference between his old, wrong and his new, correct belief system, where the two different kinds of seeing represent a materialist outlook and a spiritual or metaphysical way of viewing reality, but also provides a useful description of how an unbeliever can be brought to faith. The images of darkness, blindness, and sickness tend to be depicted in the *Confessions* in tandem with their positive counterparts, where darkness is linked to striving for the light, sickness to medicine and health, and blindness to the promise of sight. The transformative implication of these complementary images can be viewed as an exhortative technique, where the imagery portrays the process and importance of conversion and thus incites action and reflection in the intended addressee.

Augustine's personal spiritual journey is not only relatable but encourages his readers to share in his experience and engage in their own quest. By using language appropriate to Manichaeism for viewing Catholic Christian concepts, the values connected with a literal use of the Augustine's abstract and figurative expressions, enable the new subject matter to be grasped more easily by the potential Manichaean reader. Augustine employs language familiar to the Manichaeans in describing his conceptualisation of God and in expressing his faith, but he also transforms this language in order to transform his readers' thought processes. From attempting a literal vision of God with the bodily eyes, Augustine shows how a transcendent, spiritual God can be perceived with internal vision. As described in section 1.1 of this thesis, according to Tornau (2019), Augustine theory of language is more a theory of illumination. I demonstrate how the images of light and darkness, sight and blindness become symbols of Augustine's intellectual and spiritual ascent, from a material belief system to a higher spiritual belief system, and are highly effective in showing how the conceptual and abstract notions of God and divine truth can be conceived. In book 7, Augustine first shows why his young self needed a new conception of God in first place; how someone who is seeking truth might acquire a new way of thinking; and, finally, the fulfilment that a new, spiritual conception of God provides in the search for truth. This is a journey and a way of viewing God which Augustine seems to direct as an example for his readers, and specifically his Manichaean readers, to imitate.

Thus, the formulation of Augustine's theology, which he presents in book 7, is initiated against the backdrop of a Manichaean perspective on the nature of God and the soul as material substances; the designation of evil to a separate and active substance in the world; and finally the perception that God can be seen or encountered through the bodily eyes or, for the Elect, by direct revelation from the Light-*Nous*. In order to refute these tenets, Augustine uses images, expressions, and concepts with which the Manichaeans were familiar and which were understood as literal 'symptoms' of their myth. Apart from many small echoes and reminiscences, the crucial notions of light and darkness, and the experience of God through vision, seem to be strongly influenced by Manichaeism, mostly in an antithetical manner, but also as a more positive vestige of Manichaeism in Augustine's thought.

The results of the analyses of Chapter 3 lead me to conclude that there is ample internal evidence in book 7 of the *Confessions* to support this thesis concerning the protreptic communicative intention of the text aimed at a Manichaean reader. Together with protreptic elements, centred on the refutation of the Manichaean doctrine and the teaching of a Catholic doctrine, Augustine directs his intellectual inquiry and attempt to know God as an example for

his intended Manichaean reader to follow, using the language of light and darkness, as well as sight and blindness, which would be familiar to them. Through his use of these images and figurative language, I conclude that Augustine attempts to prove to the potential Manichaean reader the inadequacy of a literal and corporeal apprehension of God as light and urges them towards a new spiritual encounter with God as an immutable light. Through my reading, I have found that Augustine in no way condemns or attacks those who follow the Manichaean belief system, and the communicative intention of the narrative appears to be deeply confessional, compassionate and exhortative.

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